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# Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt

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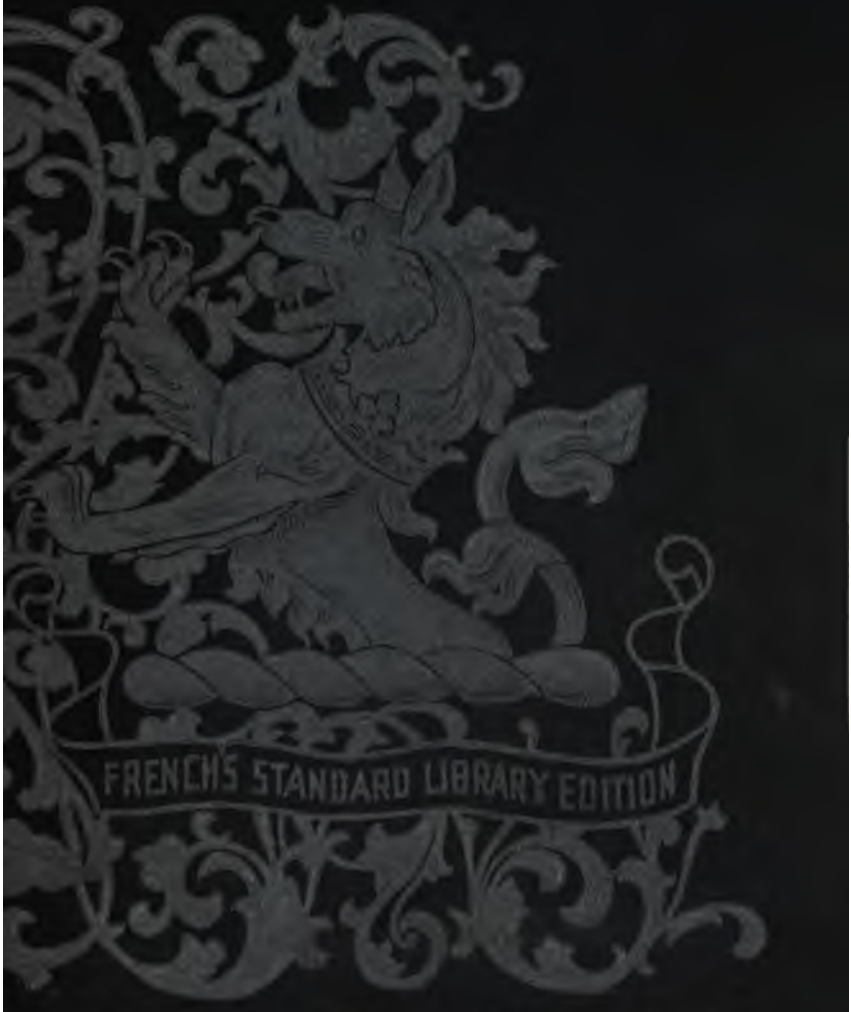


MUEL FRENCH, 28-30 West 38th St., New York

# THE FASCINATING MR. VANDERVELDT

A Comedy in Four Acts

BY

ALFRED SUTRO

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# THE GARRICK THEATRE

**Lessee and Manager: Mr. ARTHUR BOURCHIER**

*On Thursday, April the 26th, 1906, and every evening following.*

A Comedy in Four Acts,

by

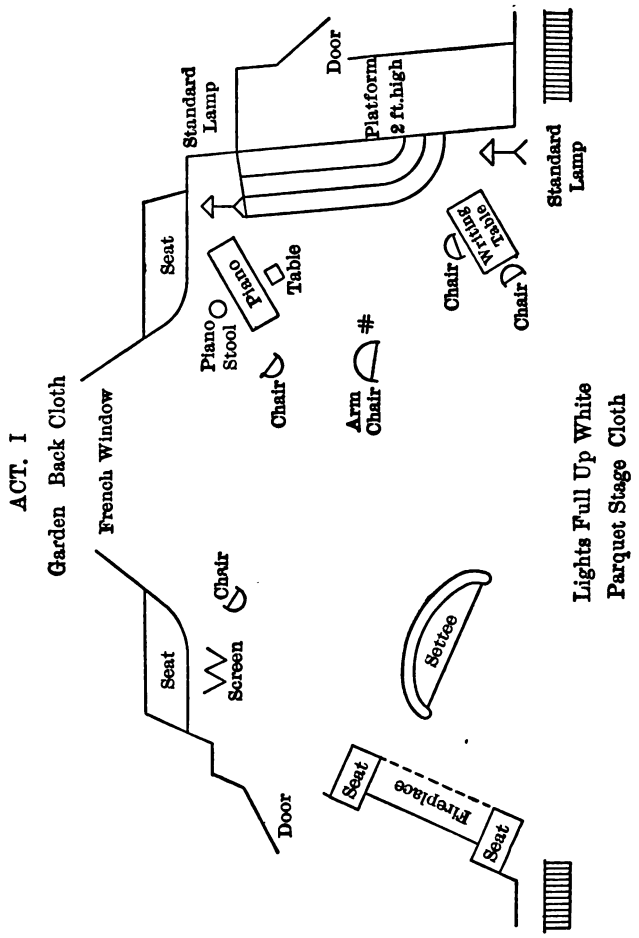
**ALFRED SUTRO**

ENTITLED

# The Fascinating Mr. Vanderveldt

| | |
|---|---|
| LADY CLARICE HOWLAND | Miss Violet Vanbrugh. |
| AGGIE COLES | Miss Muriel Beaumont. |
| THE MARCHIONESS OF HENDINGBY (pronounced Henby) | Miss Nora Greenlaw. |
| LADY CLEMENTINA DESBOROUGH | Miss Elfrida Clement. |
| MISS PELLING | Miss Henrietta Watson. |
| MRS. BREVELL | Miss Pamela Gaythorne. |
| MRS. MELLON | Miss Kate Phillips. |
| MARY | Miss Annie Stuart. |
| MR. VANDERVELDT | Mr. Arthur Bourchier. |
| COLONEL RAYNER | Mr. C. Aubrey Smith. |
| LORD WOOLHAM | Mr. Walter Pearce. |
| SIR BARTHOLOMEW CARDICK (one of (H.M.'s Judges) | Mr. O. B. Clarence. |
| MR. GODDLESTONE | Mr. George Trollope. |
| REV. HUBERT LANGSTON | Mr. Charles V. France. |
| MR. MELLON | Mr. Charles Goodheart. |
| ALFIE | Master Hugh Wakefield. |
| FOOTMAN | Mr. Douglas Imbert. |

TIME—The present.


ACT. I
Garden Back Cloth
French Window
Seat
Piano
Piano Stool
Standard Lamp
Table
Chair
Arm Chair
Door
Platform 2 ft. high
Writing Table
Chair
Chair
Standard Lamp
Lights Full Up White
Parquet Stage Cloth
Chair
Screen
Seat
Door
Settee
Seat
Fireplace
Seat

# THE FASCINATING MR. VANDERVELDT.

## ACT I.

*The drawing-room of* LADY CLARICE HOWLAND'S *cottage in Sonning. The room, which is simply but pleasantly furnished, has at back French windows opening on to the lawn; there is a path outside that winds off to the right. In the room there is a door at* R. U. E., *and another at* L., *which, when open, shows a glimpse of the hall. There is a charming view, through the door and windows, of the winding river and the blue hills beyond.*

AGGIE COLES, *a very pretty American girl of twenty-three or twenty-four, is seated at the piano, playing a Sousa march. The door* L. *opens, and* MISS PELLING *enters and crosses to* R. *of* AGGIE. *She is a handsome woman of thirty, whose face, however, wears a permanent expression of discontent. She is dressed with studied simplicity.* AGGIE *stops playing, and turns. Rises.*

MISS PELLING. (*stiffly*) Excuse me—I am Miss Pelling, Lady Hendingby's companion. Lady Hendingby is with Lady Clarice. You are Miss Coles, are you not? I was told to go to you.

AGGIE. (*who has risen*) Oh, won't you sit down? (*pushing arm-chair to* C.)

MISS PELLING. (L. *of settee* R., *sitting*) Thank you. I am afraid I am disturbing you. But I have to obey orders.

AGGIE. (*puzzled*) Oh, you're not disturbing me at all! (*she sits on arm of chair* c.) I was merely trying to hammer out a tune. Do you play?

MISS PELLING. (*drily*) The piano is supposed to be one of my accomplishments. Also, I read well—aloud, I mean—know French and German, can trim a hat, and am cheerful.

AGGIE. Oh!

MISS PELLING. Now you know as much about me as you would gather from an advertisement. You are an American, aren't you?

AGGIE. Yes.

MISS PELLING. You don't speak with an accent.

AGGIE. (*smiling*) American women don't, as a rule, except on the English stage.

MISS PELLING. I suppose your father's a millionaire?

AGGIE. (*laughing outright*) That again, you know, is rather a stage convention. There really are quite a number of American fathers who aren't rich at all!

MISS PELLING. I hope yours is?

AGGIE. (*rather surprised*) Poor dad! he's comfortable, and he sends me enough to pay my bills.

MISS PELLING. Have you ever heard of *my* father?

AGGIE. (*politely*) I'm afraid——

MISS PELLING. Sir Richard Pelling—one of the most popular men in London. He kept open house—all his friends loved him—and borrowed money. He was *very* popular. He died two years ago, and left us—my mother and three daughters—without a penny.

AGGIE. (*sympathetically*) Oh!

MISS PELLING. The creditors swooped down the day after the funeral; his friends said, "Poor old Richard!" and I became companion to Lady Hendingby. I hope *your* father isn't too popular!

AGGIE. I don't know—he works very hard. But I'm so sorry, Miss Pelling!

MISS PELLING. (*drily*) Everyone was sorry—it's quite extraordinary how much unemployed sorrow

(*rises and moves to fire-place*) there is in the world. And I meet lots of people who say, "What! *You* a companion! Dear old Dick Pelling's daughter! How sad!" And the next minute they're calling no trumps, or doubling spades.

AGGIE. I'm afraid people are very callous.

MISS PELLING. Lady Hendingby at least engaged me, and gave me a salary. Do you know Lady Hendingby?

AGGIE. Clarice has spoken to me of her mother, of course, but I haven't met her.

MISS PELLING. You will—she'll be coming down soon. She's what they call a "grande dame."

AGGIE. (*laughing*) That sounds very alarming.

MISS PELLING. A "grande dame," you know, lifts her glasses to look at you, and usually has an imposing nose. She is inclined to be rude, doesn't encourage plebeians in her drawing-room, unless they're very wealthy; dresses rather shabbily, and is the daughter of a duke. (*moving to* AGGIE)

AGGIE. (*playfully*) Invariably?

MISS PELLING. At least in this case. My employer's father was the Duke of Trenby.

AGGIE. I didn't know.

MISS PELLING. The Duke of Trenby looked like a gamekeeper, was never without a straw between his teeth, and cared for nothing but oxen and turnips. (*sitting on settee*)

AGGIE. (*laughing*) You're making me giddy!

MISS PELLING. A companion has unusual opportunities for observation. Lady Clarice——

AGGIE. (*interrupting hers, gently, rises and moves to head of settee*) She's my friend, you know.

MISS PELLING. Oh, I wasn't going to say anything unkind! I never say unkind things. Besides, I like Lady Clarice.

AGGIE. I'm glad— (*sitting on arm of chair* C.) I'm awfully fond of her. Wasn't it sweet of her to ask me down here?

MISS PELLING. You've known her long?

AGGIE. We met in Paris last month.

MISS PELLING. Lady Clarice is all right. Her sister 's a prig, and her brother 's a donkey—but I like Lady Clarice. I knew her husband. She wasn't happy.

AGGIE. She never speaks of her husband.

MISS PELLING. There's nothing to say about him except what's on his tombstone—he was the sort of man you Americans will soon be turning out by machines. My employer wants Lady Clarice to marry again.

AGGIE. (*laughing*) What a funny idea!

MISS PELLING. (*drily, turning sharply*) You don't approve of widows remarrying?

AGGIE. Oh, it's not that—but Lady Hendingby *wanting* her to!

MISS PELLING. My employer has made up her mind —and when *that* happens—— She's lecturing Lady Clarice now: that's why I was sent to you. (*turns to* AGGIE) By the way, Miss Coles——

AGGIE. Colls.

MISS PELLING. I beg your pardon.

AGGIE. It's spelt with an "e," of course, and at home we speak it Coles. But I like to be in the movement.

MISS PELLING. I see.

AGGIE. Lady Hendingby calls herself Lady Henby——

MISS PELLING. It's the one privilege left to the aristocracy. Miss Colls, I've been very frank with you —you will of course not let my employer know——

AGGIE. Of course not! (*rise and moves to head of settee*) And, Miss Pelling, really, I think it's very hard lines.

MISS PELLING. You needn't! Why, I get fifty pounds a year—*and* the reversion of Lady Hendingby's dresses. And reversion, in this case, literally means "turning again!"

MARY *comes from door* R. U. E., *and announces "Colonel Rayner," who follows her; she goes. The* COLONEL *is a soldierly, well-set-up and well-groomed man of forty-five, with a handsome, bronzed face.* MISS PELLING *rises, standing by fire-place* R.

AGGIE. (*jumping up*) Ah, Colonel, how do you do? Lady Clarice is upstairs, with her mother. Let me introduce you to Miss Pelling. (*moves down* L.)

MISS PELLING. (*below settee* R.) I fancy Colonel Rayner and I have met before.

COLONEL. (*puzzled*) I've been out of England so long——

MISS PELLING. I am now Lady Hendingby's companion. But I used to be Sir Richard Pelling's daughter.

COLONEL. (*with genuine sympathy*) What! Dear old Dick Pelling's daughter a companion! Oh, I'm sorry! (AGGIE *sits in chair below writing table* L.)

MISS PELLING. (*quietly to* AGGIE) You see?

COLONEL. (*to* MISS PELLING) I was very fond of your father. If I could in any way——

MISS PELLING. (*with, for the first time, a gentle note in her voice*) Thank you, Colonel. Should you meet a thousand a year doing nothing, you might send it along. You've been in Africa, haven't you?

COLONEL. (*sitting in chair* C.) Yes—conducting unfashionable little wars, that no one ever hears of.

MISS PELLING. What they call punitive expeditions? (*sits on settee* R.)

COLONEL. (*nodding*) That's it! Nothing to be got from them, except enteric. I've had that twice!

MISS PELLING. You've been a colonel a long time, haven't you? Why aren't you a general?

COLONEL. I've given up asking conundrums, Miss Pelling. There's a machine they call the War Office——

AGGIE. (*suddenly bursting out laughing and clapping her hands*) Oh, you are lovely, you two!

*The* COLONEL *and* MISS PELLING *turn and look wonderingly at her.*

MISS PELLING. (*drily*) I'm glad you find us amusing.

COLONEL. (*genially*) Miss Coles[1] is right. It's no use grizzling.

MISS PELLING. I never grizzle. I have already informed Miss Coles that cheerfulness is one of my accomplishments.

AGGIE. (*contritely*) I didn't mean—I'm very sorry— Only, *what* a funny country this is!

MISS PELLING. (*acidly*) At least we don't corner wheat—or lynch niggers—or sell divorces at so much a dozen——

COLONEL. (*rises merrily*) Ladies, ladies, I've been engaged for fifteen years in quelling disputes between native tribes. Don't compel me to draw my sword again! (AGGIE *rises*)

LADY HENDINGBY *comes in,* L., *followed by* CLARICE L. MISS PELLING *rises and moves up stage* R. LADY HENDINGBY *is a typical, starched, heavy, domineering dowager;* CLARICE *is a charming and exquisite woman of thirty.*

CLARICE. Ah, Colonel! Mamma, do you know Colonel Rayner? Colonel, let me introduce you to my mother. (*the* COLONEL *bows*)

LADY HENDINGBY. (*lifting her glasses*) of the Worcestershire Rayners?

COLONEL. Shropshire.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*sitting in chair* C.) Ah, yes—the younger branch.

CLARICE. (*going to* AGGIE, *whom she hasn't noticed, and throwing an arm around her*) O Aggie, forgive me! Mamma, this is Miss Coles, the very great friend

[1] Miss Coles's name is henceforth always pronounced Colls.

of mine, of whom I've been telling you. (COLONEL *goes up* C.)

AGGIE. From Pennsylvania.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*who has no sense of humour*) Ah. Clarice is coming to stay with us for a week or two. It will afford Lord Hendingby and myself great pleasure if you will join us.

AGGIE. That is very good of you. I shall be delighted.

CLARICE. (*merrily. Sitting on* L. *arm of chair* C.) One of the stately homes of England, Aggie! And not one of the merriest. Mamma insists I must marry again. It seems I've been spending more money than I should—and mamma's inviting some eligible old gentlemen for me to choose from!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*severely, with a look at the* COLONEL) Clarice!

CLARICE. Colonel Rayner, mamma, is as old a friend as a man can be whom you've known a fortnight! He has taught me to punt, and he plays cricket with Teddie——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*reproachfully*) The boy must be nearly seven, Clarice! (COLONEL *comes down* R. *to fire-place*)

CLARICE. Dear mamma, I can't help that, can I?

AGGIE. Such a sweet little boy, Lady Hendingby!

COLONEL. He'll make a fine soldier. (*by fireplace*)

LADY HENDINGBY. I intend him for the church.

AGGIE. (*staring*) But suppose he prefers the army?

LADY HENDINGBY. My dear Miss Coles, the traditions of the family have to be observed. The sons' professions go by rotation.

CLARICE. (*laughing*) O Aggie, Aggie, don't open your eyes so wide! You're not in America now, my dear—this is England! (*rises and crosses to* COLONEL) Mamma, please invite Colonel Rayner to join us at Hendingby.

COLONEL. Oh, Lady Clarice——

CLARICE. Mamma has only asked men who want to marry me—I must have one who—doesn't! (*looking at* COLONEL)

LADY HENDINGBY. It will give Lord Hendingby and myself great pleasure if Colonel Rayner will favour us with his company.

COLONEL. (*bowing*) I shall be very glad, Lady Hendingby.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*to* MISS PELLING, *who has been seated quietly in a corner*) Miss Pelling (MISS PELLING *rises and comes down to* L. *of* LADY HENDINGBY) please make a note that Colonel Rayner is coming. And kindly ring for the carriage. (MISS PELLING *is about to rise, the* COLONEL *stops her, goes to the bell, and rings.* MISS PELLING *moves up stage to below piano*) We shall expect you next Friday, Colonel. And you, Miss Coles. I trust we shall have fine weather.

CLARICE. I hope it will be—but I'm afraid, Colonel, you will find that at Hendingby everyone is good *except* the weather!

(MARY *comes in* R. U. E.)

CLARICE. Lady Hendingby's carriage, Mary.

MARY. Yes, my lady. (*she goes* R. U. E.)

MISS PELLING. (*coming* L. *of* LADY HENDINGBY) You instructed me to remind you about Mr. Vanderveldt.

LADY HENDINGBY. Oh yes! (MISS PELLING *returns up stage*) Clarice, as we were driving through the village, I thought I saw Mr. Vanderveldt getting into a motor-car—but it went off so quickly! He is surely not here? (COLONEL *turns away*, CLARICE *smiles at the* COLONEL)

CLARICE. Oh yes—he has been staying at Sonning for quite some time.

LADY HENDINGBY. H'm. He is, of course, not permitted to call on you?

CLARICE. (*laughing*) My dear mamma, what *are*

you thinking of! You wouldn't have me shut my door on an old friend! (COLONEL *rises and stands by fire*)

LADY HENDINGBY. I must really protest against your calling a man of his character your friend!

CLARICE. I'll call him by any other name you like, mamma, but I've known him for years!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*severely*) You are aware, Clarice, that your sister and I hold strong views on the subject of men—with *his* record——

CLARICE. I admit that Mr. Vanderveldt's morals are rather— (*looking at the* COLONEL *smilingly*) Parisian—but he *is* so amusing! COLONEL *moves discontentedly up stage.*)

LADY HENDINGBY. (*annoyed*) H'm. (*with a look at* AGGIE) Especially——

CLARICE. (*who has caught the look*) Oh, young American women can take care of themselves—can't they, Aggie?

(MARY *comes in* R. U. E.)

MARY. Her ladyship's carriage.

CLARICE. Very well, Mary. (MARY *goes* R. U. E.)

LADY HENDINGBY. (*rising.* CLARICE *and* AGGIE *rises.* MISS PELLING *rises*) I see, Clarice, that it's quite time you came to Hendingby. I can at least promise Miss Coles that she will not meet men of that stamp *there!* Good-bye, Clarice. (CLARICE *moves up to below* MISS PELLING *by piano, behind armchair* C. LADY HENDINGBY *kisses her coldly*) Good-bye, Miss Coles. Colonel, till Friday. Come, Miss Pelling. (*the* COLONEL *holds open the door.* LADY HENDINGBY *sweeps out, followed by* MISS PELLING, *who merely bows to the others*)

CLARICE. (*merrily, as she drops into chair* C.) Isn't mamma wonderful? Now isn't she really? Quite wonderful? So deliciously Early Victorian! Sit down, Colonel. I'm glad you and Aggie are coming

to Hendingby. They're appallingly dull down there! (AGGIE *sits in chair below writing table* L.)

COLONEL. (*sitting on settee*) Do you seriously mean to marry again?

CLARICE. My dear Colonel, I never seriously mean anything—I take events as they come! Mamma has been proving to me that I've been living on capital—if you know what that means: *I* don't—and that very soon I shall have nothing to live on at all. Besides, I've been a widow for three years—and I've always hated widows!

COLONEL. (*sourly*) Who are the—candidates?

CLARICE. Sir Bartholomew Cardick, the Judge—a very old friend, whom I've known all my life—and Mr. Goddlestone.

COLONEL. Who?

CLARICE. Mr. Erasmus Goddlestone, the great Mr. Goddlestone——

COLONEL. Who is he?

CLARICE. Dear Colonel, where do you come from? Mr. Goddlestone is the musical man, who gets up operas and things, and discovers tenors, and gives freak dinners. Oh, they're both very nice and cheerful old gentlemen, with lots of money—and mamma assures me they're quite the best she has in stock. So I'll marry one of them—oh, my dear Colonel, *don't* roll your eyes at me like that! It really is much more trouble to engage a new housekeeper!

AGGIE. Oh, Clarice! (*sits in chair above writing table and writes*)

COLONEL. (*stiffly*) I'm afraid that I——

CLARICE. (*merrily*) Dear children, *do* let 's be sensible! Why should one always fill one's mouth with inverted commas when one speaks of a husband? Perhaps, as I've had one already—you've heard of *him*, of course, Colonel, even in Africa!

COLONEL. (*racking his memory*) I can't say that I——

CLARICE. Surely, surely! Arthur Howland!

COLONEL. Arthur Howland. Oh! the cricketer?

CLARICE. Of course! Why, he established a record for his 'Varsity against the Australians—two centuries in one match—all London went mad over it! And his high jump was a marvel, and he threw the hammer further than any man has ever thrown it, before or since!

AGGIE. How proud you must have been, Clarice!

CLARICE. (*pause, half earnest and half jesting*) There was this one little drawback, you see; I fell in love with a man, and found I had married—an athlete! He's dead, poor fellow—but really, the last four years of his life, I scarcely ever saw him—and we'd only been married five!

AGGIE. Oh!

CLARICE. You see, when there wasn't cricket, there was footer—there was polo, tennis, rackets, golf—and from the moment he got up in the morning, when he used to punch a bag, till he came home at night, dog-tired, he was either running after a ball, or away from a ball, or hitting a ball, or kicking a ball! I was merely an annexe, an afterthought—a wicket he had captured, and forgotten!

AGGIE. (*laughing*) If I were you I'd bring up little Teddie in a girls' school, and teach him knitting!

CLARICE. (*looking at the* COLONEL) Now *why* is the Colonel scowling at me as though I were a hill-tribe?

COLONEL. (*abruptly*) I want to talk to you. (*rises*)

CLARICE. I had an idea that was what we were doing at present.

COLONEL. I have something rather important—(*he looks deprecatingly to* AGGIE) I wonder whether Miss Coles——(*crossing to* AGGIE.)

AGGIE (*cheerfully*) By all means! I'll go into the garden. (*she rises*)

CLARICE. (*rises, goes up to* AGGIE *by window and kisses her.*) The domineering ways he has! Aggie, we'll neither of us marry a Colonel!

AGGIE *goes laughingly into the garden; the* COLONEL *has been moving restlessly to and fro; he stands in front of* CLARICE.

CLARICE. (*merrily*) Well, warrior? (*coming down stage*)

COLONEL. (L. *of* LADY CLARICE) Lady Clarice, I want you to be serious for a moment. (CLARICE *moves to settee and sits*) There is a great service you can render to another woman.

CLARICE. (*wondering*) I?

COLONEL. Yes. You have a good heart, I know. And this is a case——

CLARICE. Go on. Who is she?

COLONEL. Mrs. Brevell.

CLARICE. (*with a grimace*) The flighty, yellow-haired little woman who lives across the road?

COLONEL. (*awkwardly*) Yes. Of course she's not very interesting. But Tom Brevell's an old friend of mine. We were at school together.

CLARICE. Well?

COLONEL. (*coming to her. Abruptly*) This Mr. Vanderveldt of whom you were speaking——

CLARICE. (*with a look that speaks volumes*) Ah!

COLONEL. (*nodding his head*) Yes.

CLARICE. (*with a shrug*) Well, I don't see what *I* can do.

COLONEL. (*earnestly*) I know her very well, of course. She hasn't much brain, and Tom has always spoiled her—but she has run straight enough so far. This Vanderveldt fellow——

CLARICE (*mischievously*) The most charming man I've ever met!

COLONEL. (*angrily*) Lady Clarice! (*moving to back of settee*)

CLARICE. Well, he is, isn't he? cynical, of course —and very naughty—you see, he gives one a thrill. Oh, I don't wonder that Mrs. Brevell——

COLONEL. (*sitting on back of settee, grimly*) I

thought I told you her husband was—my friend. And there are two little children whom he adores—and he adores his wife.

CLARICE. (*almost wistfully*) *He's* not an athlete—only a barrister! Why, doesn't he practise in the Divorce Court?

COLONEL. Yes.

CLARICE. Then what made him invite a man like Mr. Vanderveldt to his house? Surely——

COLONEL. He has such a blind faith in his wife! And *I* can say nothing to her—or to him—but I've seen it—I go there a good deal. Lady Clarice, there's danger ahead!

CLARICE. (*nodding*) When a woman with her coloured hair, and no brain beneath it, meets a man like Mr. Vanderveldt——

COLONEL. (*very earnestly*) Then a woman with *your* coloured hair, and *your* brain beneath it, may save her from wrecking her life, and her husband's!

CLARICE. (*throwing herself back and laughing heartily*) My dear Colonel! My excellent, domineering, lecturing, salvationing friend! you have mistaken my *métier*. You are a bad stage-manager, Colonel! This isn't my *rôle* at all!

COLONEL. It is the *rôle* of every woman to save another.

CLARICE. (*lightly*) Theoretically. We all subscribe to theories. In fact, it's the cheapest form of subscription I know.

COLONEL. (*sternly*) Lady Clarice, do you decline to intervene?

CLARICE. (*rises*) With all the emphasis a very hot afternoon allows me! (*moves to fireplace* R.) Be sensible, warrior! My acquaintance with Mrs. Brevell is limited to an occasional good-morning and good-afternoon. She is not the kind of woman I like——

COLONEL. (*doggedly*) She is a woman who needs help.

CLARICE. You said that before, didn't you? And

we all need help—but it's the most difficult thing in the world! And what do you think Mrs. Brevell would say if I were to—oh, it's preposterous! (*moving to* C.)

COLONEL. Try.

CLARICE. Really, you'll make me angry! What on earth should I tell her?

COLONEL. (*rising and crosses to her*) Exactly what I've said to you. Remember she has a great admiration for you—has long wanted to know you. And there are things that only a woman can say to a woman.

CLARICE. Precisely; and, believe me, those are the very things Mrs. Brevell would say to me if I interfered. She would resent it—and be perfectly justified. Come, Colonel, let 's say no more! I'll call Aggie, and we'll have tea. (*she is about to go up* C. *He lays a hand on her arm*)

COLONEL. (R. C.) Lady Clarice, you spoke very lightly just now, and a little cruelly, about your husband—*I* knew that there was an aching heart beneath——

CLARICE. (L. C.) Teeth ache, Colonel—and heads—not hearts——

COLONEL. *I* know that all this frivolity of yours lies only on the surface—and, speaking as a man to a woman, and as earnestly as a man *can* speak to a woman, I tell you that it is your duty to save Mrs. Brevell——

CLARICE. (*defiantly*) Indeed?

COLONEL. And that to shrink from this duty would be weak—and cowardly.

CLARICE. (*suddenly, very serious, looking hard at him*) Brave words, Colonel Rayner!

COLONEL. (*unflinchingly*) Yes. The truth.

*For a moment they stand face to face, then* CLARICE *suddenly breaks away.*

CLARICE. (*pettishly. Pause*) Tiresome man! (*sitting in chair below table* L.) What could I say to her?

COLONEL. How can I tell you? You know.

CLARICE. I dislike her so much! If I succeeded, it would mean having to see her again——

COLONEL. (C.) Not too great a price to pay for such a success!

CLARICE. (*in whimsical despair*) *What* a misfortune to have a Don Quixote among one's friends! (*rises and moves to* COLONEL) *When* is this interview to take place?

COLONEL. The sooner the better—at once, if possible.

CLARICE. At once?

COLONEL. Please.

CLARICE. (*annoyed*) But this is——

COLONEL. I have my reasons. Believe me.

CLARICE *shakes her head at him, half amused and half angry; then goes to the French window, and calls* "AGGIE, AGGIE!"—*then she turns to the* COLONEL.

CLARICE. (COLONEL *moves to fireplace* R.) I shall only make a fool of myself, you know! I call it——

(AGGIE *appears at the window*)

CLARICE. (*picks up paper from seat* R.) Aggie, my child, you know the woman with the—gollywog hair—across the road?

AGGIE. Mrs. Brevell? Our pet aversion? (*on* CLARICE'S L.)

CLARICE. (*with a pathetic sigh*) Yes! Will you go, like an angel, and tell her I'd like to see her—as soon as she can—I want—to ask her a favour!

AGGIE. (*amazed*) To ask her a favour! You!

CLARICE. Yes—it's insane, I know! But go, dear—will you?

AGGIE. (*laughing*) Oh yes—I'll go. Well, this *is* a funny country! (*she goes to* L.; *the* COLONEL *turns to* CLARICE)

COLONEL. (*simply*) Thank you.

CLARICE. Oh, don't be in too great a hurry! (*she*

*faces him. Pause*) Now, will you tell me, please, *why* I am doing this?

COLONEL. Because you feel it to be right.

CLARICE. (*waywardly*) I'm sorry I told mamma to ask you to Hendingby!

COLONEL. (*meekly*) If you like, I won't go.

CLARICE. That would be rude to mamma. (*sitting in chair* C.) Really, I think you good men are much more trying than the bad ones. Especially in this hot weather!

COLONEL. (*deprecatingly*) Lady Clarice, I know how unpleasant the task will be——

CLARICE. You don't know at all—you haven't an idea! (*rises and crosses to fireplace*) Here am I going to lecture a woman—I hate even to talk to! (COLONEL *moves* L. AGGIE *comes running*)

AGGIE. Clarice, she'll be here in a moment—I met her just as she was going out. She 's awfully pleased!

CLARICE. (*with a shrug*) Ugh!—Well, Colonel Rayner, you had better retire—and sing Te Deums! (COLONEL *crosses to* CLARICE. *She puts out her hand, he takes it and kisses it*) It will take me several weeks to forgive you!

COLONEL. (*gratefully*) Good-bye, Lady Clarice! And again, thank you!—Good-bye, Miss Coles. (*he bows, and goes* R. U. E.)

CLARICE. (*with whimsical fretfulness*) The provoking, tiresome, tedious copybook man! Oh, what *have* I let myself in for!

AGGIE. (*at head of settee*) What is it, Clarice?

CLARICE. Don't ask, there's a dear child! (*sitting in settee*) What *are* you to do when a man tells you he's sure you're good? Say something spiteful, Aggie, quick—to take the taste out of my mouth!

AGGIE. (*looking into the garden*) Here she comes!

CLARICE. (*discontentedly*) Through the garden—instead of being announced in the ordinary way! Intimate—at once!—Go, dear, she and I must have a talk together—and *such* a talk! (*rising and crosses*

*with* AGGIE *to door* L. *Exit* AGGIE. CLARICE *moves down by writing table* L.)

AGGIE *goes, laughing,* L. *After a moment* MRS. BREVELL, *a fluffy-haired, simpering, but exceedingly pretty woman, appears at the French window, and comes in.*

MRS. BREVELL. (*gushingly comes to* CLARICE) *Dear* Lady Clarice! I *am* so glad! Be sure that anything *I* can do is done already!

CLARICE. (*quite at a loss*) Won't you sit down? (MRS. BREVELL *sits in chair* C.) It's fearfully hot, isn't it?—How well you punt!

MRS. BREVELL. (*simpering*) It's very kind of you to say so. (*she sits*)

CLARICE. (*very embarrassed*) I'm so fond of punting myself—and I've watched you—Oh dear!—(*pause. They both turn and face each other as if to speak.* CLARICE, *still standing, with a sudden turn towards her*) You'll never guess what I've asked you here for! It's the maddest thing!

MRS. BREVELL. (*her eyes getting wider and wider*) A favour, your friend said——

CLARICE. Well, it *is* a favour, in a way; and if you don't resent it you'll be—sublime! Because I should. I should resent it exceedingly!

MRS. BREVELL. (*smoothing her skirt*) I shall be only too happy——

CLARICE. (*moving chair from below writing table to* MRS. BREVELL'S L., *and sits. Abruptly, as she sits, facing* MRS. BREVELL) I want to speak to you about Mr. Vanderveldt.

MRS. BREVELL. (*starting*) Mr. Vanderveldt!

CLARICE. Yes. (*with a change of voice*) How old are you? Twenty-four—twenty-five?

MRS. BREVELL. I'm twenty-six.

CLARICE. And I thirty—four years your senior. So I'm going to talk to you—like an elder sister. Oh, don't look so indignant! Elder sisters are horrid, I

know—I'm sure mine is! But the favour I want is—just this—to be allowed to—help you.

MRS. BREVELL. (*stiffly*) I fail to understand——

CLARICE. (*with a gesture of despair*) Of course you do—so do I! What business is this of mine, you ask—what right have I to—meddle——

MRS. BREVELL. (*a trifle sulkily*) I suppose Colonel Rayner—he is a friend of yours, I know——

CLARICE. (*nodding*) It *is* Colonel Rayner, of course. But he's *your* friend, too.

MRS. BREVELL. An absurdly old-fashioned, suspicious person—who cannot conceive that a woman can be on friendly terms with a man——

CLARICE. (*shaking her head*) No woman can be a friend of Mr. Vanderveldt's—till she's sixty.

MRS. BREVELL. (*annoyed*) Lady Clarice!

CLARICE. Except me, of course; but then I've known him a very long time—I knew his wife. She's dead, poor dear! I knew her very well—she used to—tell me things. She *adored* him! He was fond of her, too, in his way. Only it was his misfortune, and hers, that he was fond of so many other women, too, and at the same time!

MRS. BREVELL. (*stiffly*) You must not imagine that I——

CLARICE. I imagine nothing! But believe me, you are too young—and too pretty—oh, *much* too pretty!—(*pause.* MRS. BREVELL *smiles*) *I* am the only woman for whom Mr. Vanderveldt is safe. Because *I* know what his charming smile means, and that tender look in his eyes. *I* know that he hasn't one particle of heart—not—one—particle! That, of course, doesn't make him the less delightful. There could be no more fascinating companion—I quite admit that. He is as deliciously impertinent as one of Louis XVth's roués; he understands women, he knows what to say to them—and he—says it! There could be no more attractive candle for a moth—but that moth—must not be—you!

MRS. BREVELL. (*rising, offended*) Lady Clarice—

CLARICE. (*rising and speaking very earnestly*) With your splendid husband, and those two dear little boys! Ah, Mrs. Brevell, *my* husband didn't adore me, as yours does, and I assure you——

MRS. BREVELL. (*moving away* R.) I am grateful for the—lecture, Lady Clarice! And I appreciate your kind intention. But, even though you *are* a few years older——

CLARICE. (*ignoring the sting*) Mr. Vanderveldt declares he is in love with you—and you are half inclined to believe yourself in love with him.

MRS. BREVELL. (*angrily*) Oh, really! This is—(*moving to below settee*)

CLARICE. (*pressing her gently into settee*) Sit down, sit down! (*at head of settee*) After all, why *shouldn't* I say these things to you—why *shouldn't* we women ever help each other? See, I was at Monte Carlo last year—Lady Transford was there under the —protection —of a French gentleman who gave—card parties. "Under the protection of"—don't let us mince matters! I had known her very well—she was a timid, blue-eyed little thing with soft brown hair—*she* had been a friend of Mr. Vanderveldt's. When her husband divorced her—it was only two years ago—Mr. Vanderveldt never left her side—for quite six weeks! But then—well, he tires so quickly, you see! Her little son is with Lord Transford, of course— (MRS. BREVELL *turns away*) she never sees him—she presides over M. de Trémont's card-parties, at which young men lose very considerable sums. (*with a sudden change of voice, and a note of deep, genuine feeling*) Ah, Mrs. Brevell, Mrs. Brevell, Mr. Vanderveldt is not to blame, he is what we women have made him; we women who are secretly attracted by the rake, and welcome him, and make much of him, while, as for the Lady Transfords! Everyone cut her, of course, in Monte Carlo—even *I* couldn't go to her, although I wanted. Because, you see, it wasn't only

that she had forfeited her position, or even essentially that—but she was changed in herself—she had lost her self-respect—she didn't care!— (*putting her hands on* MRS. BREVELL'S *shoulders.* MRS. BREVELL *drops her head*) And *that* is the worst of all!

MRS. BREVELL. (*rising again, nervously and rather unhappily*) Lady Clarice, I don't know why you have told me all this. You mean well, of course——

CLARICE. I have never spoken to a woman before as I have spoken to you. Colonel Rayner loves your husband—and you as that husband's wife. He is a good, loyal man. He would never have taken this extreme step—of asking me to intervene—had there not been cause—danger—immediate danger! (*she has held* MRS. BREVELL'S *hands as she said these last words, and looked searchingly at her.* MRS. BREVELL *suddenly lets her head drop, and turns away*) You see! Be frank with me! Why not?

MRS. BREVELL. (*timidly*) What shall I do?

CLARICE. Never see him again—never! Sit down now, and write to him——

MRS. BREVELL. Now?

CLARICE. Yes—at once! (*pause*) Why not? (MRS. BREVELL *crosses to writing table* L. CLARICE *partly goes with her*)

MRS. BREVELL. (*hesitating*) The address on your note-paper——

CLARICE. So much the better! He'll know it was I who told you!

MRS. BREVELL *goes obediently to the desk when* MARY *comes in* R. U. E.

MARY. Mr. Vanderveldt has called, my lady.

CLARICE. Ah! (*she pauses for a moment—then, with rapid decision*) Show him in! (MARY *goes* R. U. E.)

MRS. BREVELL. (*moving to the French window*) I will——

CLARICE. (*detaining her*) No! Stay here! And tell him—now—before me!

*They stand for a moment,* CLARICE *with her hand on* MRS. BREVELL'S. MARY *returns with* MR. VANDERVELT. *He is a very handsome, clean-shaven man, with curling brown hair, and laughing blue eyes. He moves with a curious easy grace; his voice is remarkably soft and pleasant; his general appearance is virile and attractive.*

MARY. Mr. Vanderveldt. (*she goes*)

VANDERVELDT. Lady Clarice— (*taking* CLARICE'S *hand.* CLARICE *crosses to fireplace and works up* C. *round* R. *of settee*) Ah, Mrs. Brevell! A delightful surprise!

MRS. BREVELL. (*coldly*) I am glad to have met you, Mr. Vanderveldt. My husband and I are going to Scotland in a day or two.

VANDERVELDT. (*politely, with an imperceptible smile as he gazes from one lady to another*) Indeed?

MRS. BREVELL. Yes. So I will take this opportunity of bidding you good-bye.

VANDERVELDT. (*perfectly unruffled*) Good-bye, Mrs. Brevell.

MRS. BREVELL. (*to* CLARICE, *with feeling*) Good-bye, Lady Clarice. (*moving to* CLARICE *by window*—VANDERVELDT *crosses to fireplace* R.)

CLARICE. (*almost affectionately, as she walks with her to the French window*) I hope we shall see a good deal of each other when you come back. . . .

MRS. BREVELL *gone,* CLARICE *returns; she and* VANDERVELDT *look squarely at each other for a couple of seconds, then he bursts into melodious laughter, and she smiles.*

VANDERVELDT. Delicious!

CLARICE. Isn't it? (*moving down*)

VANDERVELDT. Your doing, of course?

CLARICE. Alone I did it!

VANDERVELDT. My congratulations, really! How wonderful of you!

CLARICE. Sit down. Let's have tea. Will you ring. Oh, in this hot weather! (*sitting in chair* C. *she rings*) And you should have heard me! My dear man, the things I've been saying about you!

VANDERVELDT. (*airily sitting, in settee* R. U. E.) My wife, to begin with.

CLARICE. (*nodding*) *And* Lady Transford. (MARY *comes in*) Tea, please. And tell Miss Coles. (MARY *goes* L. U. E.)

VANDERVELDT. (*nursing his knee*) Lady Transford, of course. By the way, I've had a letter from her. She's going to be married.

CLARICE. To the French gentleman?

VANDERVELDT. No; to a—youngish—Austrian baron.

CLARICE. What a happy ending!

VANDERVELDT. Isn't it? Would have rather spoiled your story, I'm afraid. Poor Mrs. Brevell!

CLARICE. (*smiling*) You don't seem heart-broken!

VANDERVELDT. Like the great Napoleon, I believe in Destiny. Also I doubt whether you would allow me to weep on your shoulder. If it hadn't been for you, though! Well, at least, I scored a moral victory.

CLARICE. Dear me, I thought I had done that!

VANDERVELDT. We won't quibble about terms. Do you know, there's a little triumphant flush on your cheek that's very becoming?

(MARY *comes in with tea, which she places on table below piano, then brings table down* C. *and places it in front of* CLARICE)

CLARICE. That's excessively kind of you. I expect the Dragon will have said something like that to St. George.

MARY. Miss Coles has gone out, my lady.

CLARICE. Ah! you're sure?

MARY. Yes, my lady. (*moving chair from* CLARICE'S L. *and places it below writing table* L. *She goes* L.)

VANDERVELDT. Destiny again!

CLARICE. With a racket this time—she'll be playing tennis at the club.

VANDERVELDT. What a responsibility you have assumed!

CLARICE. (*looking up*) I?

VANDERVELDT. Why, yes. You know the story of the chemical gentleman who resuscitated the man they had hanged?

CLARICE. (*laughing*) But you see *I* intervened *before* the noose had been fitted.

VANDERVELDT. (*meditatively, taking cup from* CLARICE) Mrs. Brevell has an adaptable neck. A very pretty one too! (*suddenly*) How nice to be you!

CLARICE. So I've frequently been told.

VANDERVELDT. All aglow with the consciousness of having saved a fellow-creature! I believe "saved" is the technical term?

CLARICE. It will pass.

VANDERVELDT. *I* rescued a man once, who was drowning.

CLARICE. Really?

VANDERVELDT. And when he'd recovered, he cursed me for my pains.

CLARICE. How disgraceful!

VANDERVELDT. Said he had chronic dyspepsia, and was reduced to milk. *Now* I let 'em drown.

CLARICE. At least it keeps you from getting wet.

VANDERVELDT. (*with a change of tone*) How long are you staying at Sonning, Lady Clarice?

CLARICE. Till Friday. I'm going to Hendingby.

VANDERVELDT. To your mother's?

CLARICE. Yes. She has been here to-day. She insists that I ought to re-marry.

VANDERVELDT. (*thoughtfully*) I'm not sure that she's wrong.

CLARICE. I'm spending too much money, and she declares I'm growing old.

VANDERVELDT. (*looking critically at her*) There *is* a wrinkle.

CLARICE. (*indignantly*) There isn't!

VANDERVELDT. (*nodding*) But there is, though. One.

CLARICE. (*rising*) Where? (*she goes to the glass on mantelpiece*)

VANDERVELDT. Under the left eye. Not very noticeable (*rising*), so far, but it 's there.

CLARICE. (*looking into the glass*) Unpleasant man! (*She returns to her seat* C.)

VANDERVELDT. After all, you're thirty-one.

CLARICE. Thirty.

VANDERVELDT. Debrett says thirty-one.

CLARICE. Bother Debrett!

VANDERVELDT. By all means. (*putting down cup on tray*) Yes, I'm inclined to agree with Lady Hendingby.

CLARICE. *That* is a comfort. Some more tea?

VANDERVELDT. No, thanks. D' you know, I've an idea——

CLARICE. Another wrinkle?

VANDERVELDT. (*at back of* CLARICE'S *chair* C.) Well, of a kind. (*gets chair from below writing table and places it on her* L.) Why shouldn't you marry me?

CLARICE. (*leaning back, and laughing*) A proposal!

VANDERVELDT. In proper form. What do you think?

CLARICE. (*highly amused*) A trifle sudden, isn't it?

VANDERVELDT. I assure you, the last time I was here, the thought flashed across me——

CLARICE. You didn't tell Mrs. Brevell?

VANDERVELDT. No—I don't think so—no. I'm very rich.

CLARICE. So I've been told.

VANDERVELDT. My father left me ten thousand a year, and I've never exceeded my income.

CLARICE. That's *most* satisfactory.

VANDERVELDT. And as of course you must marry money——

CLARICE. So mamma says.

VANDERVELDT. Well, really, I think I'd do. I can't refer you to my last place. (*exchanges a look with her*)

CLARICE. No.

VANDERVELDT. But I've a sense of humour, and so have you. After all, that's the essential, don't you think?

CLARICE. (*laughing*) A sense of humour, and ten thousand a year! It's tempting!

VANDERVELDT. Then what do you say?

CLARICE. (*cheerfully*) Oh, I say, no! Declined with thanks.

VANDERVELDT. (*imperturbably*) That's very unreasonable. Since you intend to marry——

CLARICE. I do.

VANDERVELDT. Then why not me?

CLARICE. Well, in the first place, I don't—shall we say?—admire you.

VANDERVELDT. I amuse you, don't I?

CLARICE. Oh yes; very much!

VANDERVELDT. What more do you want in a husband?

CLARICE. Well, there *are* other qualities.

VANDERVELDT. The ones you read of in novels! Really, I'm quite in earnest.

CLARICE. So am I.

VANDERVELDT. (*turning his chair round he facing her* Will you marry me, Lady Clarice?

CLARICE. Certainly not, Mr. Vanderveldt. (*imitating him*)

VANDERVELDT. I've rather set my heart on it.

CLARICE. That, of course, is a pity.

VANDERVELDT. And when I've set my heart on a thing——

CLARICE. (*rising, and speaking a little coldly*) Then the thing sometimes says "Good-bye, Mr. Vanderveldt."

VANDERVELDT. (*rising too, with undiminished cheerfulness*) I shall go to Hendingby on Friday. (*putting chair to below writing table*)

CLARICE. (*shaking her head*) I'm afraid my mother has heard too much about you——

VANDERVELDT. Oh, I'll get over that! I shall be there!

CLARICE. By all means. You'll find it dull.

VANDERVELDT. Not at all! And we shall be engaged before I leave.

CLARICE. (*raising her eyebrows*) Indeed?

VANDERVELDT. Oh yes. I've quite made up my mind. Now I'll go.

CLARICE. Good-bye. (*she holds out her hand*)

VANDERVELDT. (*retaining it in his*) Have you any preference as regards the engagement ring?

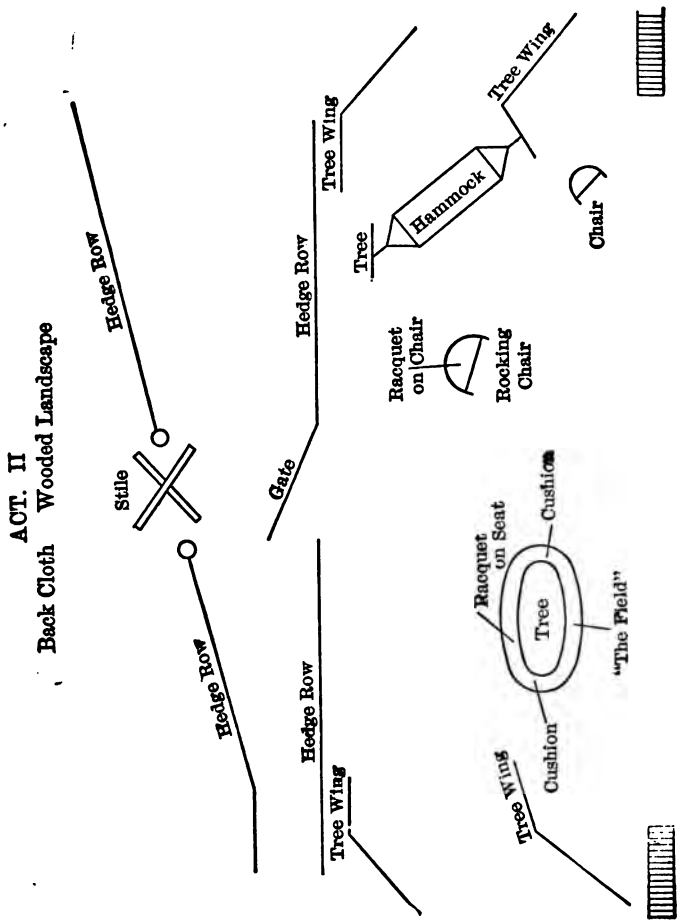
CLARICE. (*biting her lip*) Isn't that rather—premature?

VANDERVELDT. I'm going to town to-day—I thought it might save time.

CLARICE. (*releasing her hand, and for the first time speaking with real earnestness, and allowing her annoyance to appear*) Mr. Vanderveldt, you are the last man in the world I would think of marrying.

VANDERVELDT. (*beaming*) Oh, thank you so much! Now there really will be some merit in becoming engaged! Good-bye!

*He goes towards door* R. U. E. *and exits.* CLARICE *remains, standing, exceedingly vexed, as the curtain falls.*


ACT. II
Back Cloth Wooded Landscape
Hedge Row
Stile
Hedge Row
Hedge Row
Gate
Hedge Row
Tree Wing
Tree Wing
Tree
Hammock
Tree Wing
Chair
Racquet on Chair
Rocking Chair
Racquet on Seat
Cushion
Tree
"The Field"
Cushion
Tree Wing
Lights Full Up White

## ACT II.

*A sheltered spot in the grounds of Hendingby Castle, surrounded by trees. At back there is a little gate, opening on to a private carriage road which winds through the grounds. Beyond is a pleasant picture of well-wooded hills. There are paths to* L. *and* R.

AGGIE *and* LORD WOOLHAM *come in from* R., LORD WOOLHAM *helps* AGGIE *over stile.* LORD WOOLHAM *is a pleasant faced, breezy boy of twenty-five.*

WOOLHAM. Ah, Miss Coles, let's stop here for a moment, will you?—it's so jolly and shady. Sit down, and tell me some more about America.

AGGIE. We've nothing like this over there, these fine parks of yours, with their grand old trees and grand old houses! With us everything's new. Oh, Hendingby's a glorious place—I just love it! (*sits on seat round tree*)

WOOLHAM. (*takes cushion from seat under tree, puts it on the ground and sits*) The place is all right! But, to tell you the truth—well, I hate it!

AGGIE. Lord Woolham!

WOOLHAM. I do, that's a fact. One gets tired of the country, you know—of the silly, fat-headed sheep and the lumbering cows. It's all very well for poets to rave about purple hills, and brooks, and poppies in the cornfields—but a fellow gets pretty sick of 'em, I can tell you! Give *me* Piccadilly!

AGGIE. Fancy wanting town when you've Hendingby to live in!

WOOLHAM. Oh, that's all very fine! Besides, you've been here long enough to see what my people are like. They're so thundering good!

AGGIE. (*with a smile*) They *are* good, of course.

WOOLHAM. And they want me to be, too! Clementina's thirty-five—it's easy enough for her—*I*'ll

be good when I'm thirty-five. But at present I'm twenty-three.

AGGIE. (*teasingly*) Are you as much as that?

WOOLHAM. (*lifting himself on to an elbow*) Oh, Miss Coles, don't *you* be like the others, and treat me as though I were a boy! D'you know, they're making me stand for the House—I'm what they call nursing the constituency. *I* don't want to—I loathe politics—but I'm the only son, and I've got to. So I'm here nearly all the time!

AGGIE. Oh, but Lord Woolham, how fine to take part in the government of your country!

WOOLHAM. Half a dozen men do the governing—and another dozen or two do the talking—and the rest waltz in and out of a lobby to the sound of a muffin-bell. Oh, it's awful rot, you know! And I have to read up Education Bills, and Chinese Labour, and Aliens, and Fiscal Questions—fancy!—and address meetings, and be heckled, and kiss babies, and shake hands with everyone—and be popular!

AGGIE. (*laughing*) Poor Lord Woolham! But you *would* be a Marquis's son!

WOOLHAM. I tell you, if I had known that Clementina belonged to the same brood, and had come down before me, I'd have scooted around and got the ticket-clerk up there to give me some other label. It's all Clementina, you know. She's the tail that wags every one of us. It's she who persuaded the mater to hold all these meetings here—Anti-Vivisection and Discharged Prisoners, and Temperance, and the Church in Wales——

AGGIE. (*merrily, rises and crosses her hands over her breast*) Don't forget the Companions of the Perfect Life! (*sits again*)

WOOLHAM. Yes—that's her latest! She's awfully proud of it! All the kids in the village have their C.P.L. badge. Of course it's only a fad—she has taken to goodness as men do to drink. But at least if a fellow gets a bit jolly he don't expect all his

family to lie under the table too! The mater kicked a bit at first, but now she 's as bad as Clementina!

AGGIE. (*laughing*) I'm terribly afraid of Lady Hendingby!

WOOLHAM. She bosses us all, of course, from the guv'nor down to the smallest boy in the stables. Now she has pitched on poor Clarrie—tells her she must get married. It 's hard luck, isn't it? She sends up to town for a pair of Methuselahs——

AGGIE. They're very nice old gentlemen—but I do hope Clarice won't!

WOOLHAM. Oh yes, she will—you don't know the mater—*and* Clementina! And poor Clarrie 's like me—we talk very big—but we're putty up to the waist! She'll do as she 's told—you'll see!

AGGIE. I call it an awful shame!

WOOLHAM. (*with a chuckle*) So does old Van!

AGGIE. (*wondering*) Mr. Vanderveldt?

WOOLHAM. Rather! I say, how they all hate him! It 's a great lark, isn't it? The way he snubs Clementina, and chaffs the mater—it does one's heart good! And he always pops up whenever the Judge, or Goddy, begins to get sentimental. Artful chap, old Van! He has got something up his sleeve, I'll swear!

AGGIE. (*puzzled*) Up his sleeve?

WOOLHAM. I do declare I've dropped into slang! Clementina 's always getting at me for that. Let's call it a deep-laid scheme—is that good American?

AGGIE. (*smiling*) Quite.

WOOLHAM. (*ingratiatingly, leaning towards her and taking her hand*) Do *you* believe in saving people, and things, Miss Coles?

AGGIE. In moderation. (*rises and moves to* WOOLHAM'S L. *at back of him and takes up racquet from chair* L. C.)

WOOLHAM. Well, I've an idea the mater means to marry *me* off as well—I've noticed her eye on me of late——

AGGIE. Let 's hope she'll choose someone nice!

WOOLHAM. It don't seem to alarm you at all! Mrs. Cording-Jones—the Bishop's wife, you know—has a daughter about seven feet high, with a squint and red hair—Clem thinks a lot of her——

AGGIE. (*merrily*) When I get back to America, I'll send over some enterprising young heiress, and she shall elope with you!

WOOLHAM. That 's not quite what I (JUDGE *speaks off* R. I. E.)—Hullo! Some one coming! Cave! (*he sits up, and assumes a pedantic tone*) The Aliens Bill, Miss Coles, is a highly complicated measure. The fundamental principle underlying it is—— (*The* JUDGE *comes in from* R.) Oh, it 's only the Judge! (*gets racquet from seat* C.)

*He jumps up*—AGGIE *rises. The* JUDGE *is a well-preserved, elderly man, with gray hair and whiskers, and a rather hatchet-like face.*

JUDGE. Walter, my boy, I've been looking for you. (*crosses to* L.)

WOOLHAM. (*moving towards* AGGIE) We're just going to the house, Judge. Let me carry your racquet, Miss Coles.

AGGIE. No, thanks—I can manage it! And I'll take yours, if you like, and leave you with Sir Bartholomew.

JUDGE. (*deprecatingly*) The fact is that I——

WOOLHAM. (*eagerly* C.) Miss Coles, if you're not careful you'll find Mrs. Cording-Jones up there. This is her day!

AGGIE. Mrs. Jones won't bite me!

WOOLHAM. Heavens, don't you address her as Mrs. Jones! She'd have a fit! (AGGIE *laughs, and moves*)

WOOLHAM. (*regretfully*) Au revoir!

AGGIE. Au revoir.

*She waves her racquet, and goes* R. WOOLHAM *stands, following her with his eyes; the* JUDGE *goes to him, and takes him fussily by the arm.*

WOOLHAM. (R. C.) What a jolly little girl she is!

JUDGE. (L. C., *passing his arm through* WOOLHAM'S *and making him turn round*) The fact is, Walter—the fact is—I am thoroughly displeased.

WOOLHAM. What 's up now?

JUDGE. (*acidly*) Can you inform me why Mr. Vanderveldt is here?

WOOLHAM. (*chuckling*) Funny! The very question Goddlestone put to me yesterday!

JUDGE. Goddlestone, eh? But why? His visit seems very ill-timed.

WOOLHAM. (*his back against a tree*) The one thing in the world the mater allows the guv'nor to care for is salmon-fishing. He 's too poor to hire a river—and Van has the best one in Scotland. He put it at the guv'nor's disposal—and the old man was so jolly pleased that he asked him down to Hendingby.

JUDGE. H'm. I blame your father.

WOOLHAM. (*with a chuckle*) So did the mater—*and* Clementina! But I don't know why. Van 's all right.

JUDGE. (*discontentedly*) He caps my stories, Walter, when he doesn't interrupt them; and on the rare occasions when I secure an interview with Clarice he contrives to join us in the most indiscreet manner. And he says things—in fact, I've a lurking suspicion, at times, that his—jests—are aimed at—ME! Walter, I'm not at all sure that my—case—is progressing.

WOOLHAM. (*off-handed*) Don't be down-hearted! Buck up!

JUDGE. (*with a wintry smile*) Were we in Court now, I should have to ask you for an explanation of those words! But how *can* I "buck up," as you call it, when Clarice seems to show so manifest a preference for the society of Mr. Vanderveldt?

WOOLHAM. He 's such a funny beggar—he makes her laugh! But don't be afraid—he 's not in the running!

JUDGE. Walter, your use of slang is most displeas-

ing. Tell me, my boy, *have* I a chance, do you think?

WOOLHAM. (*beginning to be very bored, sitting on tree seat*) Why not? You're one of her oldest friends.

JUDGE. (*ruefully, sitting on tree seat* L. *of* WOOLHAM.) Oldest—yes—that 's the rub. I'm old—one can't argue about it—it 's the point of law one doesn't leave to the jury. But, confound it, if I'm old, so 's Goddlestone, too! And *I* only wear a wig on the Bench, whereas he——

WOOLHAM. (*laughing*) Don't be spiteful, Judge! I say, *isn't* Miss Coles ripping?

JUDGE. (*absently*) A very pleasant young woman. Yes—that 's the one thing that comforts me—the thought of Goddlestone! Walter, you're perfectly certain the choice lies between him and me?

WOOLHAM. Oh yes—that 's all right!

JUDGE. (*he rises, and claps* WALTER *on the shoulder*) Walter, you *have* bucked me up! (WOOLHAM *rises*) I don't think any woman could care for Goddlestone! All he can do is to twaddle about music. Clarice might as well marry a pianola!

MISS PELLING *comes in from* R., *moves up to gate* C., *by back of tree* R. C.

MISS PELLING. Lord Woolham!

WOOLHAM. (*turning*) Hullo! Ah, Miss Pelling?

MISS PELLING. Lord Woolham, they are wanting you at the house; Lady Clementina has sent me——

WOOLHAM. (*sulky*) What 's up now, Miss Pelling?

MISS PELLING. I believe it 's a deputation from Little Ockham——

WOOLHAM. (R.) Hang Little Ockham!

JUDGE. (*briskly. Crosses to* WOOLHAM. GODDLESTONE *enters from* L. U. E.) Walter, my boy, meet your deputation like a man. Don't pledge yourself to anything—put your head on one side, look very serious, and say you'll consider their propositions. That 's politics, Walter. I'll go with you.

*While the* JUDGE *is speaking to* WOOLHAM, GODDLESTONE *has come in from the gate at back, has gone to* MISS PELLING, *and detained that lady who was about to return to the house. The* JUDGE, *as he goes off with* WOOLHAM, *catches sight of* GODDLESTONE.

JUDGE. Hullo, Goddlestone! How about that golf of ours?

GODDLESTONE. I'm ready—— (*coming down* C.)

JUDGE. I'll meet you at the links in half an hour. I'll just help Walter to polish off his deputation. (*he goes a step to* R. *and returns to* GODDLESTONE) By the way, I've some good news for you—I saw an Italian fellow in the village, with a real London barrel organ! (*He laughs heartily, and goes with* WOOLHAM R. I. E.)

GODDLESTONE. (*sourly*) That's the sort of joke people laugh at in Court! I say, Miss Pelling, the Judge is always with Lord Woolham. Looks as though he were trying to get round him?

MISS PELLING. (*sitting in chair* L. C.) You needn't be afraid, Mr. Goddlestone. Lord Woolham has no influence over his sister.

GODDLESTONE. (*grumbling.*) You never can tell—not that I'm afraid of the Judge! I call it absurd for an old fellow like that—I put it to you, Miss Pelling!

MISS PELLING. (*serenely*) You have given me a pearl brooch, Mr. Goddlestone, a very handsome dressing-case, and five hundred cigarettes.

GODDLESTONE. (*blankly*) Oh, really!

MISS PELLING. And therefore, of course, you have all my sympathy, and I trust that Lady Clarice will give you the preference.

GODDLESTONE. (*bewildered*) Thank you. (*moves* R. *a little*)

MISS PELLING. But I confess that, as regards age, I can see little to choose between the Judge and yourself.

GODDLESTONE. (*crestfallen. Sits on tree seat*)

That's rather unkind. I'm at least five years younger.

MISS PELLING. That may be; but you've both of you reached the—period—when a few years, one way or the other, really don't signify!

GODDLESTONE. (*very depressed*) I'm sorry you think that—but still—it's not only his age—he can talk of nothing but Law! (*more cheerfully*) If he bores Lady Clarice as much as he does me——

MISS PELLING. (*serenely as ever*) Well, you know, I don't think he finds *your* conversation—thrilling——

GODDLESTONE. (*hurt*) Oh, Miss Pelling!

MISS PELLING. You remember, Mr. Goddlestone, when you gave me the first bribe.

GODDLESTONE. A bribe! (*rises and goes a step towards her*) Oh! I knew your father!

MISS PELLING. (*imperturbably*) When you gave me the first bribe, I told you that all I could offer in return was perfect sincerity. And——

GODDLESTONE. (*meekly, leaning over her chair*) Miss Pelling, I'm really very unhappy! I can't help feeling that I'm not—making much headway.

MISS PELLING. I don't think you are. But, then, neither is the Judge.

GODDLESTONE. (*pettishly*) I'm not bothering about the Judge. It's this man Vanderveldt!

MISS PELLING. I've told you, again and again, that you need not look on Mr. Vanderveldt as a rival.

GODDLESTONE. (*walks up and down*) I know—but still—she's with him nearly all the time!

MISS PELLING. He amuses her. You and the Judge merely buzz around, like a couple of bumble-bees.

GODDLESTONE. Whenever I try to propose—and I *have* tried—she puts me off! She always seems to to regard it—as a—joke!

MISS PELLING. Well, *don't* be put off. Ask her —like a man! (*she rises suddenly*) And here's your chance now! (*moves across to* R.)

CLARICE *comes from the* L. U. E. *with an armful of flowers, and is about to pass through with a friendly nod, when* GODDLESTONE *intercepts her.*

GODDLESTONE. (*with eager determination*) Lady Clarice, won't you stay here for a moment?

CLARICE. (*with a quick look at him*) By all means, if you wish it. (*coming through gate* C.) Don't let me drive you away, Miss Pelling. (*to chair* L.)

MISS PELLING. (*coldly*) I was just going. I have my duties to attend to. (GODDLESTONE *moves* C.)

CLARICE. If you *must* go. (*then to* MISS PELLING, *as that lady moves off*) Should you meet Colonel Rayner, I wonder would you be kind enough to let him know I wish to speak to him—very particularly?

MISS PELLING. Certainly, Lady Clarice.

CLARICE. Thank you *so* much. He will find me here. (*sits in hammock.* MISS PELLING *goes* R.)

CLARICE. (*leaning back in hammock*) Now, Mr. GODDLESTONE, I'm at your service—till the Colonel comes.

GODDLESTONE. (*discontentedly*) Why have you sent for the Colonel?

CLARICE. It has suddenly occurred to me that I have a question to ask of him.

GODDLESTONE. (*eagerly*) Lady Clarice, *I* have a question to ask of *you.* (*sits in rocking chair, which he draws to hammock*)

CLARICE. I'm not at all sure that this is a proposing afternoon, Mr. Goddlestone.

GODDLESTONE. (*blankly*) I beg your pardon?

CLARICE. I tell you this is your own interest. Don't you often wonder, when you meet a couple, why *she* married him, or *he* her? Because the question was asked at the right moment, under the right tree, when the right bird was singing.

GODDLESTONE. (*looking up disappointedly*) Then now——?

CLARICE. (*rocking herself, freakishly*) The world

is full of women who married the wrong man—because the—other—insisted on an answer—just when *he* wanted it.

GODDLESTONE. (*fretfully*) Lady Clarice, you're making fun of me! (*rocking in chair*)

CLARICE. Why? These are general laws, are they not? 'Tis so easy for a man to ask a woman to marry him—*he* does all the talking—she has only to say yes or no. And the "no" (GODDLESTONE *moves forward in chair*) lies on the tip of the tongue, you see—whereas the "yes" is hidden deep down, and has to spring up of itself, like a bird from its nest—it can never be sent for! Or let us say "no" is a page always ready to open the door—while "yes" is the queen herself, locked away behind twelve iron gates.

GODDLESTONE. (*bewildered*) Why do you say these things to me?

CLARICE. Well, they're true, don't you think? Also they help to pass the time till the Colonel comes. I'm very anxious to see the Colonel. And besides—do you really wish me to believe—that you've not understood?

GODDLESTONE. (*in despair*) I'm quite in the dark.

CLARICE. (*with mock sentimentality*) How strange, and you such a lover of music! I could play it to you on a piano; I could sing it—if there were a moon. You can hear it sometimes in the swish of water over rocks, when the tide is low——

GODDLESTONE. (*throwing up his hands*) Lady Clarice, I don't know what you mean!

*The* COLONEL *comes from* R. *and stops below seat round tree, picks up paper and watches* GODDLESTONE *over it*

CLARICE. (*briskly*) Well, I shall have to explain it some other time, for here is the Colonel. (GODDLESTONE *rises, moves a step to* R., *watches* COLONEL, *then close to* CLARICE)

GODDLESTONE. *When* will you explain?

CLARICE. (*lightly*) When? Oh to-morrow.

GODDLESTONE. (*eagerly*) Is that a promise?

CLARICE. Oh yes—why not? Now go and play golf with the Judge. (GODDLESTONE *hums and moves towards* COLONEL, *then exits through gate to* R.)

GODDLESTONE *goes off slowly—puzzled and wondering;* CLARICE *keeps her countenance till he has gone, then throws herself back in her hammock and laughs, and laughs*

CLARICE. Was ever woman in such humour wooed —was ever widow in such humour won! Sit down, Colonel, sit down. Why do you think I've sent for you?

COLONEL. (*sits on tree seat—takes off hat*) I've no idea.

CLARICE. Well, you needn't look such a martyr. Some people would like my sending for them. You've an expression on your face that makes me inclined to dye my hair.

COLONEL. (*fretfully*) Lady Clarice——

CLARICE. I assure you I'm becoming dissatisfied with the colour. Everyone's going in for henna to-day.

COLONEL. (*drily*) Have you sent for me to tell me that?

CLARICE. (*airily*) "Inter alia," as the Judge would say, "inter alia." My dear Colonel, was there *ever* such a dull party as ours? And you avoid me—

COLONEL. You have shown no especial desire for my society.

CLARICE. They say a little boracic acid keeps milk from turning sour; I'll write to the stores for a pound, or a gallon—how *do* they sell acids?—and drop it into your whiskey. (*rises and moves rocking chair to* C.)

COLONEL. I can't say I'm very happy here—the—atmosphere—is disturbing.

CLARICE. I warned you it wouldn't be gay. Mamma and Clementina are suffering from acute moralitis. *You* are inclined that way too.

COLONEL. (*a little grimly*) Indeed?

CLARICE. (*rising, and putting a flower into his buttonhole*) Dear Oliver Cromwell, your look is a homily, your smile a sermon with four heads, and your frown a writing on the wall! (*brings rocking chair forward. She goes back to her chair*) But let us be serious. (*at back of rocking chair*) You couldn't take Mrs. Cording-Jones out and drown her?

COLONEL. I'm afraid not. There are bye-laws.

CLARICE. The days are gone when gentlemen did little services of the kind at a lady's bidding. Colonel, I want your advice, your sympathetic counsel, your guidance, and direction—— (*sits in chair*)

COLONEL. (*lifting his eyebrows*) Mine? (*picks up racket besides him*)

CLARICE. Who else? Don't you keep a sort of repairer's shop on the moral highway—pump virtue into Mrs. Brevells, and fit new tyres on punctured souls? Very well—Lady Clarice Howland presents her compliments to Colonel Rayner, and will he tell her, please, whether she should marry Mr. Goddlestone or Sir Bartholomew Cardick?

COLONEL. Colonel Rayner's compliments, and he doesn't know. Why marry either?

CLARICE. That's not the point—I've *got* to! It has to be one or the other! And I can't always keep off Mr. Goddlestone with fairy stories, or lure the Judge on to talk about lawsuits, and so forget his own! Be a nice Colonel, and choose me a husband!

COLONEL. (*shifting his position*) Lady Clarice—— (*puts down racquet*)

CLARICE. (*in comical protest*) Oh, *do* leave your eyebrows alone! I know when one of them rises in that superior fashion, I'm going to be scolded. I don't *want* to be scolded, Colonel—I want sympathy!

COLONEL. (*rising and moving away* R.) Lady

Clarice, I'm a dull dog—*how* dull I never have realized till to-day——

CLARICE. (*following him, meekly*) Dear Boanerges, I'm not asking for your autobiography, but for advice——

COLONEL. (*savagely*) My advice! Well, really, what does it matter? whether you marry Tweedledum or Tweedledee——

CLARICE. If I only knew *which* was Tweedledum!

COLONEL. I regret that I cannot approach this subject with the levity it appears to demand. I have always looked upon marriage as a somewhat serious institution——

CLARICE. (*moving* C., *addressing the trees*) How dear the word "institution" is to the British heart! But I interrupt you. Pray go on.

COLONEL. (*abruptly*) I am leaving Hendingby to-morrow.

CLARICE. (*surprised*) To-morrow—why? You were asked for a fortnight, and I understood you had accepted——

COLONEL. I need scarcely give you the excuse I am inventing for your mother.

CLARICE. Oh, no. And perhaps I could help you? I'm certain you're not a good liar. (*turns to him and sits in chair* C.)

COLONEL. (*hesitatingly, and looking away from her, speaking with a feeling that he cannot control*) The fact is, I've—reached the age when—a man can offer a —very genuine—friendship—to a woman. . . . I met you, and liked you, and thought we were friends. (*sits on seat by tree*)

CLARICE. And aren't we?

COLONEL. I gave you a very real proof of that friendship when I asked you to save Tom Brevell's wife from being ruined by a——

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Poor Mr. Vanderveldt!

COLONEL. (*angrily*) Precisely. To you he is

"poor Mr. Vanderveldt." I see we can *not* be friends, Lady Clarice.

CLARICE. (*rocking herself*) When *I*'ve just given you the greatest possible proof—asked you to choose me a husband——

COLONEL. (*with simple earnestness*) I'm hopelessly old-fashioned, I know—but I confess that I've always believed that a—necessary—preliminary to a woman marrying a man—was her telling him—that she—loved him.

CLARICE. Dear Sentimentality, I am a widow!

COLONEL. (*with a sudden outburst of anger rises, puts on his hat and goes up* C. *Returning to* CLARICE'S L.) Dear Flippancy, and Frivolity, and— (*he checks himself*) Lady Clarice, you know now—*why* I am going. Mr. Goddlestone and the Judge are a pair of old fools—but I realize that—folly—can attack a man—at any age. . . .

CLARICE. (*sitting up, with her hand to her chin*) That is obscure, and demands a footnote.

COLONEL. I am leaving Hendingby to-morrow. (*moving to back of her chair*) For your kindness to Tom Brevell—and to me—you have all my gratitude. (*sits on tree seat*) At Sonning you showed a side to me—or I imagined you did—that all the world does not see——

CLARICE. (*rocking again*) Dear Imagination, I have as many sides as a polygon, or a politician, or a——

COLONEL. (*distinctly hurt*) I am not in a mood for further banter, Lady Clarice. (*he stalks off indignantly through gate and over stile to* R. CLARICE *sits for a moment, rocking herself and laughing; then suddenly gathers up her flowers, rises, and is about to hurry after him, when* CLEMENTINA, *off,* R., *calls* "Clarice, Clarice!" CLARICE *stops, and turns.*)

LADY HENDINGBY *and* LADY CLEMENTINA *come in from* R. 1 E. CLEMENTINA *is a hard-faced woman of forty, dressed in black, with studied simplicity*

CLARICE. Mamma and Clementina! Why aren't you sitting at Mrs. Jones's feet, and leading a Perfect Life? Isn't this her day? (LADY HENDINGBY *and* CLEMENTINA *sit on tree seat*)

CLEMENTINA. (*coldly*) The Bishop is not very well —Mrs. Cording-Jones was unable to come. (CLARICE *about to go through gate* c.) Please sit down, Clarice. Mamma and I have something to say to you.

CLARICE. (*sitting*) About the Judge and Mr. Goddlestone, of course?

CLEMENTINA. Yes. Clarice, mamma and I are by no means satisfied with your attitude.

CLARICE. Dear me! I didn't know I had an attitude!

CLEMENTINA. (*sourly*) Clarice, you are, I know, much admired for your—verbal gymnastics. But they are quite wasted on us. And, if I might say so, somewhat out of place in a person of your age.

CLARICE. (*meekly*) Thank you.

CLEMENTINA. It requires no especial subtlety to turn everything into ridicule, as you do, but, believe me, it does not advance matters at all! We've come to tell you that the Judge and Mr. Goddlestone have both been complaining to us—they feel they are being played with——

CLARICE. If they imagine they're amusing to play with! And if they're displeased, why do they stay?

CLEMENTINA. Clarice, we do not wish to go over the ground again with you——

CLARICE. Quite unnecessary—I know every inch of it.

CLEMENTINA. You fully agreed with mamma and myself that——

CLARICE. (*impatiently*) Yes, yes, I did. I've no money, I'm extravagant, my boy 's growing up, I'm no longer very young—and therefore I must marry one of these—respectable, elderly gentlemen. Very well, I'm resigned—I mean to. But at present I don't know

which—cheque-book—I prefer. Why should I be hurried?

CLEMENTINA. No one wishes to hurry you, Clarice; but both the Judge and Mr. Goddlestone have a certain feeling of resentment as regards Mr. Vanderveldt.

CLARICE. Mr. Vanderveldt! Why?

CLEMENTINA. You appear to show them so plainly that you prefer the society of this thoroughly worthless person.

CLARICE. I thought one of the rules of the Perfect Life was to avoid speaking ill of our neighbours.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*who has listened with a heavy frown on her face, now rising in extreme displeasure, crosses* LADY CLEMENTINA *to* CLARICE'S R.) Clarice, this must not be.

CLARICE. Mamma!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*sternly*) I object to your tone, I object to your manner, I object to your general behaviour. Your father was foolish enough to invite this unpleasant person to Hendingby because of some wretched salmon river that he was allowed to fish in—but, there was no reason whatever for you so markedly to exceed the ordinary limits of civility one has to show to a guest.

CLARICE. (*crushed—in feeble protest*) I——

LADY HENDINGBY. The presence of this person here is distasteful to me; and, if you please, will at least *appear* henceforth to be no less distasteful to you. I have no more to say, Clarice; but I expect to be—obeyed.

(LADY HENDINGBY *gathers up her skirts, and is preparing to go with* CLEMENTINA, *who has also risen—* CLARICE *remaining in her chair, in angry submission—when* VANDERVELDT *comes through the wicket, and jauntily approaches the party*)

VANDERVELDT. Good afternoon, ladies! What glorious weather—no one can help feeling happy on a day like this! (*to* LADY CLEMENTINA, *as she moves off*

*to* R.) Lady Clementina, look! A C. P. L. badge! I picked it up, the other side of the hedge, at the foot of an apple-tree.

CLEMENTINA. (*coldly*) Indeed?

VANDERVELDT. I conclude that the wearer, intent on stealing apples, first carefully divested himself of his badge! What a tribute to your teaching, Lady Clementina!

CLEMENTINA. (*biting her lip*) Are you coming, mamma?

LADY HENDINGBY. Yes.

VANDERVELDT. I see they are erecting a marquee on the lawn—what elevating function have you in store for us this evening, Lady Clementina?

CLEMENTINA. (*shortly*) There is to be a meeting of the local branch of the Woman's Suffrage League.

VANDERVELDT. Delightful! I wonder whether I might be allowed to say a few words——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*turning and facing him*) We are fully aware, Mr. Vanderveldt, that matters of this importance have no interest for you. But I am sure you will not resent my suggesting that a little seriousness does not come amiss when serious subjects are mentioned.

VANDERVELDT. (*cordially*) I *quite* agree, Lady Hendingby! But you wrong me in thinking that I am not interested in Women's Suffrage. I assure you it has always been my principle in life—to give women everything they asked for!

LADY HENDINGBY *and* CLEMENTINA *look fiercely at him, but go without a word*, R. 1 E.

CLARICE. (*leaning back, and laughing*) Good man, why do you stay here?

VANDERVELDT. Well, you see, no one wants me—and there's a charm in that. (*puts hat on tree seat* C.) Besides, it is salutary. Are there not foolish people in the world who declare the aristocracy to be frivo-

lous, and wildly gay? Henceforth I shall silence them with this badge—the badge of the C. P. L.! (*puts on badge*)

CLARICE. (*with a sigh*) *How* I've been bored today!

VANDERVELDT. It is good for you. Whatever happens is good. Nature, in her wisdom, gave us the sea so that people might be sick when they crossed the Channel. There are analogous reasons for the existence of Mrs. Cording-Jones. (*sits on tree seat*)

CLARICE. You are turning philosopher?

VANDERVELDT. (*sitting*) Lady Clarice, I am conscious of a great change in me. These few days spent in the society of your admirable mother and sister have opened my eyes to many things. And—not the least!—is my audacity in ever having ventured—to lift those orbs—to you!

CLARICE. (*rocking herself, lightly*) Ah, of course! I had forgotten.

VANDERVELDT. The ring, Lady Clarice—the engagement ring I so foolishly boasted of—has been dropped into a hidden recess of the bag one always leaves behind. It has been borne home to me, with terrible suddenness, that I am not—good. (*takes off badge and puts it on seat*)

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Fancy!

VANDERVELDT. And that, to your respectable family, goodness is the essential ingredient—the daily beef, as it were. Well, I am only the mustard.

CLARICE. Which one always leaves on the plate.

VANDERVELDT. Yes! And I retire, therefore, in favor of the immaculate Goddlestone, or the austere, if twaddlesome, Judge.

CLARICE. If I only knew which!

VANDERVELDT. The Judge, beyond a doubt. His duties, at least, keep him in Court so many hours a day, whereas the musical man, like Home Rule, would always be with you. And you would burn, while Goddlestone was fiddling.

CLARICE. I'm not sure that you're wrong. We'll see.

VANDERVELDT. As for me, before I return to the wicked world——

CLARICE. You're going?

VANDERVELDT. To-morrow.

CLARICE. Everyone's going to-morrow!

VANDERVELDT. You're sorry? (*rises and goes to her*)

CLARICE. I have the feeling of the—cave-dweller—when the glowworm's tail goes out.

VANDERVELDT. There are so many shining lights here! But, before I take my sorrowful departure, I have a favour to ask of you.

CLARICE. A favour?

VANDERVELDT. Yes. Oh, of the most elementary order!—You remember your Browning?

CLARICE. In a headachey way.

VANDERVELDT. I was thinking of "The Last Ride." You know?

CLARICE. "My mistress bent that brow of hers"——

VANDERVELDT. Exactly. "Those deep dark eyes, where pride demurs." Well—why not?

CLARICE. Why not what?

VANDERVELDT. She had refused him—as you refused me, and he was resigned—again like me—and he said, "Let us have one last ride together!" And they rode. Well, my motor's ready.

CLARICE. (*laughing*) A motor! How unpoetic!

VANDERVELDT. I offer forty horses to Browning's two. Will you?

CLARICE. That would be the last straw! Mamma and Clementina do not approve of you.

VANDERVELDT. (*meekly*) I feared as much! (*moves* R. *and picks up hat off tree seat*)

CLARICE. And it would seem their sentiments are shared by Mr. Goddlestone and the Judge.

VANDERVELDT. (*sententiously*) The unsnared rabbit, Lady Clarice, does not swallow onions with a view to preparing itself for the poacher's dinner.

CLARICE. Which means?

VANDERVELDT. That at present—it will not be for long—you are free to do as you please. When next we meet you will babble softly of trombones, or be absorbed in the strange concoction you have devised to keep the Judge awake on the Bench. (*moves to her*) Let us ride.

CLARICE. I daren't! There'd be such a fuss!

VANDERVELDT. When they learn that I leave to-morrow——

CLARICE. Even then——

VANDERVELDT. And are told this ride of ours shall have been directly responsible for my departure——

CLARICE. But why this insistence? Whether we sit in a car, or here?

VANDERVELDT. Lady Clarice, I am a rejected suitor, am I not? If you grant me this favour, at least, when I bid them good-bye to-morrow, the Judge will not be facetious at my expense, or Goddlestone melodious. Be a good Princess, and come! The car's ready.

CLARICE. (*rising, crosses to* R.—*pause—looks at* VANDERVELDT—*then speaks*) I must go and put on my veil——

VANDERVELDT. Well, do—but be quick—or someone will appear and stop us.

CLARICE. (*as she goes*) I shouldn't, I know—but I've had *such* a day of it! (*as she goes off*, R., *she sees the* COLONEL *coming over stile* C.) Ah, Colonel! Mr. Vanderveldt wants me to go motoring with him. Tell him, Mr. Vanderveldt. Tell him all! And see what he says!

(*She laughs and runs off*, R. 1 E. VANDERVELDT *has been swearing softly to himself, but is perfectly unruffled as he steps forward to meet the* COLONEL.)

COLONEL. (*with a heavy frown* L. C.) Motoring—with you?

VANDERVELDT. (*lightly*, R. C.) Yes.

COLONEL. When?

VANDERVELDT. As soon as Lady Clarice returns—she's gone to put on her veil. Excuse me—I'll just make sure that the car's there.

(*He goes to the wicket and calls* "Willis!" *Voice off*, "Yes, sir!" VANDERVELDT *calls* "Get ready!" *Voice off*, "Right, sir!"

COLONEL. (*to* VANDERVELDT, *who has come back to him*, C.) I suppose you will have no objection to my going with you?

VANDERVELDT. (*pleasantly*) I should love it, Colonel, at any time.

COLONEL. I mean now.

VANDERVELDT. (*lightly*) Now? Ah, now—is unfortunately impossible.

*There is a moment's silence, as they stand looking squarely at each other.*

COLONEL. (*slowly.*) Mr. Vanderveldt, you and I hold different opinions on most things——

VANDERVELDT. (*gracefully*) A fact that renders our intercourse so delightful!

COLONEL. But I am convinced that you yourself will see how excessively unwise it would be for Lady Clarice——

VANDERVELDT. (*with sudden determination*) My dear Colonel, you object to this ride?

COLONEL. I do. Most strongly.

VANDERVELDT. And I presume you intend forcibly to express your objection to Lady Clarice on her return?

COLONEL. As forcibly as she will permit me.

VANDERVELDT. Then, Colonel, I should like to tell you something—in confidence. May I?

COLONEL. (*surprised*) If you wish it.

VANDERVELDT. In the strictest confidence—to remain a secret, for to-day at least, between us two?

COLONEL. (*stiffly*) I am not in the habit of breaking a confidence.

VANDERVELDT. My engagement to Lady Clarice——

COLONEL. (*completely staggered*) What!!!

VANDERVELDT. Will be made public to-morrow. (*pause*)

COLONEL. It is amazing! why, only this afternoon——

VANDERVELDT. Much has passed since then.

COLONEL. She was hesitating between the Judge and Mr. Goddlestone.

VANDERVELDT. You remember your Æsop, Colonel! And the event is of course very recent. But it justifies the ride, does it not? (*pause*)

COLONEL. (*slowly*) Mr. Vanderveldt, I cannot profess to be—overjoyed—at your announcement——

VANDERVELDT. (*genially*) Frankly, Colonel, I didn't expect it.

COLONEL. Nor can I—very sincerely—congratulate Lady Clarice on her choice.

*He turns on his heel and stalks off* R. VANDERVELDT *beams. He goes to the wicket, and calls,* "Bring up the car, Willis!" *Voice off,* "Yes, sir." VANDERVELDT *goes back, and waits. After a moment* CLARICE *comes running from* R. 1 E., *motor horn ready.*)

CLARICE. Wonderful luck! No one saw me, or stopped me! Why, where's the Colonel?

VANDERVELDT. He's gone. (*putting on gloves*)

CLARICE. Why?

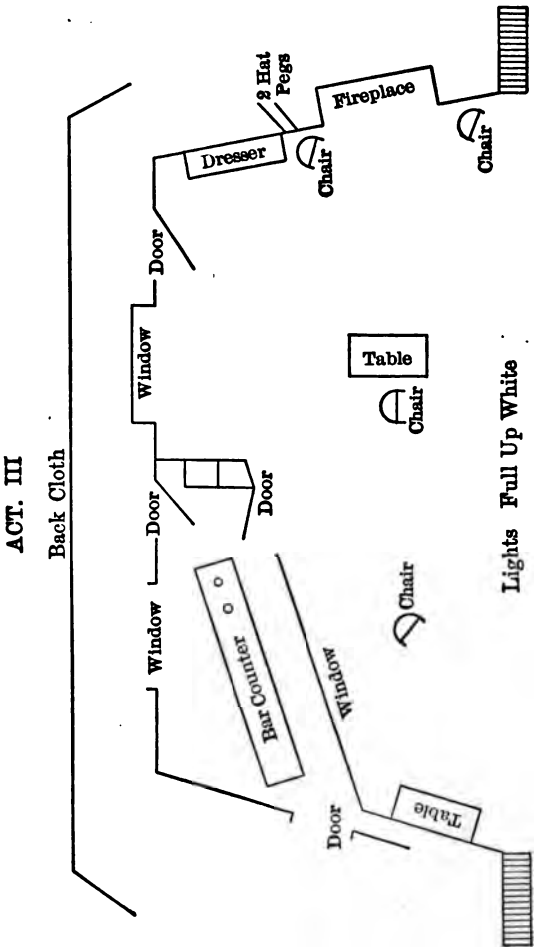
VANDERVELDT. I hardly know—he wouldn't wait.

CLARICE. (*shrugging*) Oh well—if *he* sees no harm in it! I expected a sermon! But how silly! He might have come with us!

VANDERVELDT. Yes—it's a pity. Shall we go? (*moves to gate and opens it*)

CLARICE. We'll be back soon?

VANDERVELDT. Oh yes—in good time for dinner. (*he passes through gate and holds it open*)


ACT. III
Back Cloth
Window
Door
Window
Door
Door
Dresser
2 Hat Pegs
Chair
Fireplace
Chair
Table
Chair
Bar Counter
Chair
Window
Door
Table
Lights Full Up White

CLARICE. (*as she goes*) I wonder whether the Colonel's cross? (*she passes through gate*)

(*They pass out, and he shuts the gate. Looks in the direction of the* COLONEL. *The Curtain falls. When it is raised again the Stage is empty and a Motor Horn is heard off.*)

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## ACT III.

*The parlour of "The Cow and Calf" Inn at Ingleby. At* L. C. *there is a door, opening directly on to the road; and, close to this door, a long, low window, with diamond-panes, and a window-seat underneath. A good slice of the room, on the* R., *is walled off; in the* L. *centre of this wall is a door which shows the inside of the tap-room, and the back of the bar-counter is seen, with beer-pulls, tankards, etc. In a straight line from this door is another, opening on to the road. The parlour is pleasantly and substantially furnished, in the old-fashioned Early Victorian way; there are coloured hunting-prints on the walls, large photographs of Lord Beaconsfield; to the* L. U. S. *is an old oak dresser, plentifully garnished with pewter plates and cups; in the centre is a gate-legged oak table, with a bowl of flowers on it.*

*On the other side of the road are bare, hedgeless fields, behind which the down rises abruptly. It is a treeless landscape, rather grim and depressing, with an air of isolation that is heightened by the dull gray evening effect.*

*As the curtain rises the door leading to the bar is open;* MELLON, *the landlord, a stout man with a slow, drawling, broad Sussex accent, is leaning with both elbows on the counter, puffing at his pipe;* MRS. MELLON, *his wife, a pleasant-faced, motherly body, is bustling around, cleaning glasses, etc. They both have their backs turned to the audience.*

ALFIE, *a bright boy of fifteen, is heard running ana puffing on the road outside, and bursts into the tap-room door, shouting* "Father, father!"

MRS. MELLON. (*who has a brisk, bright, manner of speaking, and much less accent than her husband*) How often I've told you, Alfie, not to get out of breath like that!

ALFIE. (*still puffing*) Father, draw a gallon of ale!

MELLON. (*taking down a big can, and going to the beer-pull*) A gallon! Oo's thirsty?

ALFIE. (*volubly*) There's a motor-car broke down —we've been shovin' it more'n a mile, me an' Tom Dickson an' Harry Smelter an' Willie Framp and old Jack Times and the sexton—an' they're all done up with this last bit of 'ill, and the gentleman sent for the ale——

MELLON. (*drawing the beer*) Lor'!

MRS. MELLON. Is the gentleman coming here, Alfie?

ALFIE. Yes—an' a lady—oh mum, such a lady! I've never seen anything like her! When she smiles —well, lor'!

ALFIE *has said this with immense admiration.* MRS. MELLON *with duster hastens into the parlour, giving touches to things and setting chairs straight, etc.* MELLON *lifts the can to* ALFIE *across the counter.*

MELLON. Easy now, boy—mind you don't spill it.

ALFIE *takes hold of the can, and goes off quickly through the tap-room door, and turns off,* L. *down the road.* MELLON *comes into the parlour.*

MELLON. (*below table* R. C.) A bit o' luck for us that, mother. It's a mercy they dratted machines does bust up sometimes.

MRS. MELLON. (*bustling about,* L. *of table*) Put on your coat, Thomas, do, and make yourself look decent-like. Oh! (*she pauses in dismay*) We've got nothin' for supper—there's only the pork!

MELLON. (*putting on his coat, which hangs on a*

*nail behind the tap-room door*) Pork be good enough for any Christian, *I* think.

MRS. MELLON. What do *you* know about ladies an' gentlemen, an' their ways? You go and see whether Mrs. Begbie can let us have a chicken, an' dig up some potatoes—and—oh! (ALFIE *opens door* L. C.)

CLARICE *and* VANDERVELDT *have come in, piloted by* ALFIE, *both looking very doleful.* CLARICE *is excessively tired, and lets herself fall into a chair,* (R. *of table*) *with a sigh of extreme relief.* VANDERVELDT *throws his hat on dresser up* L. ALFIE *remains up at door* L. C.

CLARICE. Oh, *what* a treat to sit down!

MRS. MELLON. (*bustling around her*) *Do* have something, m'm—it's a stiff walk up that hill.

CLARICE. I'd like a little ginger-beer. (MELLON *goes into the tap-room and takes down a bottle, which he uncorks*)

MRS. MELLON. (*to* VANDERVELDT) And you, sir?

VANDERVELDT. I had a pull at the can! I told the men to put the car in the shed—it will be all right there?

MRS. MELLON. Oh yes, sir—sure! (ALFIE *comes down* L. *of table* C.)

*She hurries into the tap-room.* MELLON *is pouring the ginger-beer into a glass, and hands it to her; she says to him* "Stupid! Put a drop of something in it! don't you see how tired she is!" *and, while saying this, she seizes a white bottle and pours a drop into the glass, which she then puts on a tray and takes to* CLARICE, *who has been leaning back, quite exhausted, fanning herself with her handkerchief, while* VANDERVELDT *stands by the wall, the picture of mute despair.*

MRS. MELLON. Here, m'm.

CLARICE. Thank you. (*she takes the glass and has*

*a long drink*) Oh, that's good, that's exceedingly good! (CLARICE *sighs*, ALFIE *sighs*. MRS. MELLON *motions* ALFIE *to go. He goes into bar. She hands the glass back to* MRS. MELLON, *and sits up quite revived*) I feel *ever* so much better! But I do believe there was a— (*she looks enquiringly at* MRS. MELLON)

MRS. MELLON. (*reassuringly*) Just a drop o' gin, m'm—not enough to hurt you!

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Oh! And my sister a teetotaler!—Well—and where are we?

MELLON. (*who has followed his wife into the room*) Ma'am?

VANDERVELDT. (*stepping forward*) Yes—that's the point! Where are we?

MELLON. This be Ingleby, sir. There bain't much to see here—but they do tell as there be the remains of summut 'istorical-like, on the top o' the down——

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Oh, we've not come for *that!* The men who brought up the car don't seem to have much geography. How far are we from Hendingby?

MELLON. (*blankly, scratching his head*) Henby, m'm?

VANDERVELDT. (*impatiently*) Yes, my good friend—or *Hendingby*, if you prefer it.

MELLON. Never heard tell o' such a place, sir. (*he turns to his wife*) Have you, mother?

MRS. MELLON. (*shaking her head*) No, never. And I've travelled a bit, too!

CLARICE. Where *have* we got to! Hendingby's not far from Willingford.

MELLON. Willingford! Lor'! You be a good fifty mile from there.

CLARICE. (*sinking back into her chair*) What! Fifty miles! (*she looks helplessly at* VANDERVELDT)

VANDERVELDT. (*reeling under the blow*) Good Heavens! Impossible!

MRS. MELLON. Fifty miles it is, sir! I've been there more'n once. It takes three hours by train. You change at Calby, then at Slowcombe and——

CLARICE. (*to* VANDERVELDT) Surely this cannot be! There must be some mistake!

VANDERVELDT. (*shamefacedly*) I've a terrible suspicion that instead of turning back home, as I thought, after we'd got to Slowcombe, I must have gone in a circle somehow——

CLARICE. Gracious!

VANDERVELDT. And we went pretty fast—that wretched machine of mine——

CLARICE. Fifty miles! Oh! And three hours by train! We shall certainly *not* be home in time for dinner! Well, let's make the best of it! We'll send a wire, and then take the train.

VANDERVELDT. (*miserably*) That's all we can do! (*to* MELLON. MRS. MELLON *moves down a little to* R.) Which is the nearest station—and have you a time-table?

MELLON. Bardale be the station, sir—that be five mile from here——

MRS. MELLON. But there's no train from Bardale after six o'clock. (MRS. MELLON *looks into bar*)

CLARICE AND VANDERVELDT. Oh!

MELLON. And it have just struck six, sir. (*comes back to* R.)

CLARICE. Catastrophe! Well, which *is* the nearest station where we *can* get a train?

MELLON. Calby Junction, m'm—on the main line, that be—you'll be gettin' trains there, right up to midnight, you will.

CLARICE. Well, thank Heaven for that! And how far are we from Calby?

MELLON. It be a matter of seventeen mile, m'm.

VANDERVELT. Seventeen miles! Awful! Well, can't be helped! Put your best horse in a trap—quick now—and we'll start at once. (MELLON *and his wife look blankly at each other*) You *have* a trap, I suppose?

MELLON. Yes, sir—a 'andsome waggonnette—an' there be cushions o' rale velvet, there be——

CLARICE. (*amused*) Real velvet—fancy! Well, hurry——

MELLON. But I ain't got no 'orse, m'm—at least, not at present, I ain't——

CLARICE. (*crushed*) Oh! No horse!

VANDERVELDT. (*impatiently*) But surely, in the village——

MELLON. You won't find no 'orse in Ingleby, sir, you won't, nor not within five mile.

CLARICE. What? (*she turns to* MRS. MELLON, *who has been sympathetically twisting and untwisting her apron*)

MRS. MELLON. They was all sent for, this morning, m'm, to Bardale—they've a big hauling job at the railway——

MELLON. Fifty ton o' granite, sir, to be lugged across country—it 'ave took every 'orse there was——

CLARICE. (*to* VANDERVELDT) What *are* we to do?

MELLON. (*down* R.) I've got two 'orses, m'm, an' good uns they be—they'll be back termorrer——

CLARICE. To-morrow!

MRS. MELLON. (*back of table* C.) And we can make you very comfortable here, m'm, though this be such a poor-looking place. My man's pretty rough, but I was at service in Calby when I was a girl——

CLARICE. You're very kind—but we don't want to stop here—we *must* get home somehow!

MELLON. (*to* VANDERVELDT) Sure the motor-car's bust, sir?

VANDERVELDT. It's not "bust"—but it won't go! Something must be wrong with the piston. There's no one here, I suppose, who repairs motors?

MELLON. I've told the blacksmith, sir, agen and agen, that 'e ought to learn about them things—but 'e don't 'old with 'em, sir—very religious 'e be, sir, an' 'e ses shoein' 'orses were wot 'e were intended to do——

MRS. MELLON. (*nudging him*) That's enough, Thomas! (*to* CLARICE) I'm afraid you can't leave

here to-night, m'm—but we'll do what we can—— (*takes glass and tray from table going towards bar*)

CLARICE. (*to* VANDERVELDT) What *will* mamma say? Mr. Vanderveldt, use your ingenuity! Think!

VANDERVELDT. (*mournfully*) Lady Clarice, I'm quite at a loss!

MRS. MELLON. (*to* MELLON, *in a whisper*) Lor'! They ain't married!

MELLON. (*above* MRS. MELLON) Lady Clarice, 'e called 'er! Wy, she's a ladyship! Per'aps them folk don't marry?

MRS. MELLON. (*severely*) Thomas!

MELLON. 'T any rate we'll put it on in their bill! (MRS. MELLON *takes tray into bar—comes back, stands* R.)

CLARICE *and* VANDERVELDT *have been pondering lugubriously*

CLARICE. (*with an inspiration*) How silly of us! We'll telephone!

VANDERVELDT. (*beaming*) Of course!

MELLON. There bain't no telephone nearer than Bardale, marm (VANDERVELDT *stamps his foot*)—an' after the last train be gone from there, sir—which be at six o'clock—the porter 'e locks up the station, sir, 'e do, an' 'e goes off, sir, till the mornin'. (*enter man in bar, rings bell on counter*) This be a poor place, you see, marm. (*goes into bar, serves man with beer*)

CLARICE. (*with the resignation of despair*) At least we can send a telegram?

MRS. MELLON. Yes, my lady—but you must be quick—the telegraph office is at Bardale——

CLARICE. I'm beginning to hate Bardale!

MRS. MELLON. And it closes at seven, my lady—but Alfie shall run. (*beckons* ALFIE, *who comes in, stands by* MRS. MELLON R. C.)

CLARICE. Have you a telegraph-form?

MRS. MELLON. Ah, m'm—I'm afraid——

VANDERVELDT. (*taking a letter from his pocket and*

*tearing off a half sheet*) Here. Write on this. (*he gives her a pencil*)

CLARICE. (*scribbles the address, then pauses*) What *shall* I say?

VANDERVELDT. "Motor broken down at Ingleby, afraid shall be late."

CLARICE. (*laughing, despite herself, as she writes*) Late! Oh dear! (*she hands the paper to* ALFIE, *who has come eagerly forward*) Here. Give him some money, Mr. Vanderveldt. (ALFIE *gets to back of table* C. *To* ALFIE) I'm sorry you'll have to run such a long way.

ALFIE. (*with enthusiasm*) Oh, that's nuthin', m'm! I like it!

VANDERVELDT. (*in the act of giving money to* ALFIE) I hear a cyclist's bell! Give me the telegram—I'll get him to send it! (*he snatches the telegram from* ALFIE *and rushes out* L. C.)

ALFIE. (*disappointed*) *I* could have took it, m'm.

CLARICE. (*patting his cheek*) Good boy! (*to* MRS. MELLON) I really don't know what to do! It seems there's nothing for it but to stop here. *I* can't walk seventeen miles!

(*Enter* MELLON. *He stands* R.)

MRS. MELLON. Lor'! no, my lady!

CLARICE. But why *are* you so far from anywhere?

MELLON. Well, don't you see, m'm——

MRS. MELLON. (*nudging him*) My lady——

MELLON. My lady, *that* side be the downs (*he flourishes his arm*) and *this* side the sea, so we're cut off, m'm, as you might say——

CLARICE. Oh well—it's a funny adventure! No telephone, no train, no horses—and a motor that won't go! At least we're lucky to have found your inn!

MRS. MELLON. (*pushing* MELLON *aside*) How about supper, your ladyship?

CLARICE. Oh, we'll see—we'll let you know later. (VANDERVELDT *comes back*)

MRS. MELLON. (*nudging her husband*) Come, Thomas! Now then, Alfie, manners! (*drawing curtain at bar window*) You mustn't stare like that! (*to* CLARICE) There's a bell there, your ladyship, if you want anything.

*She goes through the tap-room door, followed by* MELLON *and* ALFIE, *who gives one long last look at* CLARICE, *then follows the others and shuts the door.*

CLARICE. (*rises, turning round, and facing* VANDERVELDT) Well! (*taking off her cloak gives it to* VANDERVELDT, *who hangs it on peg above fireplace* L.) This is a pretty pickle! What have you to say for yourself?

VANDERVELDT. (*gloomily*) I am overwhelmed!

CLARICE. Was there *ever* such a chapter of accidents! First, your chauffeur has a toothache, and can't come with us; then you lose your way, and go on instead of turning back; then the car breaks down at a place that's seventeen miles from nowhere! Don't look so unhappy! I'm not blaming you— (*sits* R. C.) it's fatality!

VANDERVELDT. Fatality. Yes.

CLARICE. With the climax of those fifty tons of granite! Oh dear, there *will* be a hubbub at home!

VANDERVELDT. I'm afraid so.

CLARICE. However—it seems we can do nothing—but resign ourselves gracefully! Now please don't continue to look so miserable—or I shall go and inspect the something historical-like on the top of the down!

VANDERVELDT. (*opposite her, and then, with a sudden change of voice and manner*) What is your idea of destiny, Lady Clarice?

CLARICE. (*promptly*) Having to sit in a musty room with an amateur motorist who asks conundrums! Don't you agree? (*their eyes meet*)

VANDERVELDT. (*sententiously, nursing his knee*)

I regard destiny as a tree with ripe fruit, which sometimes falls into a lucky man's lap. (*brings chair down to* L. *of table* C. *Turns chair back to audience*) But wise people don't wait for the fruit to fall—they shake the tree!

CLARICE. I've heard Clementina say things like that at her "Children's Happy Evenings."

VANDERVELDT. Without illustrations, Lady Clarice! But in this case I—*have* shaken the tree!

CLARICE. (*laughing*) You've done what?

VANDERVELDT. (*demurely*) *I* am the owner of those fifty tons of granite, Lady Clarice.

CLARICE. (*staring*) Mr. Vanderveldt!

VANDERVELDT. Though that's not quite accurate—I *should* say the hirer. And between ourselves you've no idea what a fuss people make about lending you all that stone for a couple of days!

CLARICE. Do you wish me to understand that *you* sent it down here?

VANDERVELDT. (*cheerfully*) Yes. To Bardale station: to be dragged from there ten miles or so to Calthorpe station, on the Great Western—where it will be put on to trucks again and sent back to town.

CLARICE. (*coldly*) And may I ask *why* you have provided this little summer outing for the granite?

VANDERVELDT. Oh, it wasn't—sentiment! I don't really suppose the stone appreciates it at all. But you see I had to get rid of the horses.

CLARICE. (*looking hard at him*) You had to get rid of the horses?

VANDERVELDT. (*meeting her gaze unflinchingly*) Yes. (*pause*)

CLARICE. Then this is a plot?

VANDERVELDT. (*beaming*) That's the word, Lady Clarice—it's a plot?

CLARICE *looks fiercely at him for a moment—then, overcome by the absurdity of the thing, she throws herself back in her chair, and laughs and laughs.*

VANDERVELDT. (*rippling*) It *is* funny, isn't it?

CLARICE. (*shaking with uncontrollable merriment*) Funny!

VANDERVELDT. You can't imagine the trouble I had to find a place like this, without a telegraph office or a station—a real Sleepy Hollow, tucked in a corner! The way I've been studying ordnance maps, guide-books, time-tables——

CLARICE. But how did you contrive that the car should break down just there?

VANDERVELDT. It *didn't* break down!

CLARICE. (*puzzled*) What do you mean? It wouldn't go!

VANDERVELDT. (*putting his hand in his pocket and taking out a plug, which he hands her*) They call this the sparking plug. It connects the electric spark with the engine. Take it out, you break the circuit—the car stops.

CLARICE. (*fingering the plug, which she holds in her hand*) And you took it out!

VANDERVELDT. (*triumphantly*) I did! Without your noticing, of course. (*laughs*)

CLARICE. Then all that vigorous turning of the handle, and crawling underneath the machine——

VANDERVELDT. Mere local colour!

CLARICE. Splendid! But at least you needn't have stopped two miles from here!

VANDERVELDT. I had come faster than I had intended—it wouldn't do to arrive too early. Also I confess that I wanted—to tire you a little!

CLARICE. (*genially*) *Very* ingenious, Mr. Vanderveldt! Quite nicely thought out—with that crowning touch of the granite! *Most* artistic! (CLARICE *rises and bows.* VANDERVELDT *bows low to her.*) And now that I've paid you the tribute of my admiration, there seems no reason why you shouldn't put the sparking plug—that's its name, isn't it?—back again, and take me home to my sorrowing family! (*moves* R.)

VANDERVELDT. Dear Lady Clarice, you're surely

not serious! How would that help me? (*comes to* R. *of table*)

CLARICE. (*laughing at him*) You funny man! How will it help you if I stay here?

VANDERVELDT. You see, I'm an obstinate person—and what I said to you at Sonning——

CLARICE. This afternoon, of course, was part of the plot?

VANDERVELDT. That goes without saying! Lady Clarice, I am really *most* anxious that you should marry me.

CLARICE. (*pleasantly*) That's *such* a pity, as I don't intend to! (*genuinely amused and clapping her hands in glee, crossing to* L.) What magic is there about the inn of the "Cow and Calf," do you think, that will make me say "yes" to-morrow?

VANDERVELDT. I am afraid your ladyship forgets the reputation your servant has so laboriously built up for himself——

CLARICE. My servant forgets that I have, less laboriously but perhaps more successfully, established a reputation of my own! Mr. Vanderveldt, I'd like to be angry—but I can't—really, I can't!

VANDERVELDT. (*leaning on table*) When I was very young, I was in the diplomatic service, third secretary at Berlin—and a wily old minister once told me—I've treasured the words!—that men did not succeed in life by their own cleverness, but by carefully practising on the stupidity of others.

CLARICE. (*stifling a yawn*) I *do* hope you're not going to be dull, Mr. Vanderveldt! (*sits on chair below fireplace*)

VANDERVELDT. A stodgy principle, perhaps—like all principles—but let us apply it! There is a convention—an absolutely absurd, ridiculous and unreasonable one, I freely admit—but still a convention—that between the hours of sunset and breakfast the members of your delightful sex must not wander abroad, except under proper companionship.

CLARICE. A description, you fancy, that cannot—strictly—be applied to you?

VANDERVELDT. (*meekly*) Unfortunately, no! (*with a sudden twinkle*) Just *think* what Mrs. Cording-Jones will say!

CLARICE. (*laughing*) But you forget, my admirable philosopher, that my people will very shortly receive the telegram——

VANDERVELDT. (*coolly, as he produces it from his pocket*) This?

CLARICE. (*rises, for an instant losing her temper*) You didn't send it?

VANDERVELDT. (*blandly*) Dear Lady Clarice, that would have spoiled all!

CLARICE. (*merrily, sits on front of table* C.) The plot undoubtedly thickens! But there is *one* little matter that you have forgotten! The Colonel knew of our expedition—he will inform them—and the natural conclusion will be that we've met with an accident——

VANDERVELDT. (*shaking his head*) I'm afraid that the Colonel's air of mystery——

CLARICE. Mystery! Why?

VANDERVELDT. You remember, that he came along just as you went to put on your veil. His arrival was most inopportune. I was to tell him, you said. Well—it was a critical moment. He used hard words—very unwise of Lady Clarice, and so forth. He meant to stay, and lecture you on your return. You were not very decided—you might not have come——

CLARICE. I probably shouldn't! Well?

VANDERVELDT. So I gave another shake to the tree!

CLARICE. (*merrily*) And what fell off this time?

VANDERVELDT. (*slowly*) I told the Colonel that your engagement to me would be made public to-morrow.

CLARICE. (*starting fiercely to her feet*) What!

VANDERVELDT. Having previously pledged him to secrecy—but only for to-day.

CLARICE. (*haughtily*) This, Mr. Vanderveldt, exceeds the limits——

VANDERVELDT. (*whimsically*) So did Cæsar when he crossed the Rubicon! (CLARICE *crosses to* R. *angrily*) How splendid you look when you're angry! I've never seen you angry before——

CLARICE. (*in cold anger*) There is a term, Mr. Vanderveldt. Permit me to say to you——

VANDERVELDT. (*raising deprecating hands*) Oh don't, please! That preamble always heralds something unkind. *Don't* be unkind to me! I'm very sensitive!

CLARICE. You told the Colonel a deliberate falsehood——

VANDERVELDT. Conceive my position! The coast was clear, the chauffeur had his toothache, the horses were pulling away at the granite——

CLARICE. (*laughs*) I don't like lies, Mr. Vanderveldt.

VANDERVELDT. Nor do I—I hate 'em! and, like everyone else, I only use them when I'm obliged to! But, after all, this was merely a temporary lie. To-morrow it will shed its dark mantle, and appear as shining truth!

CLARICE. (*smiling in spite of herself*) Indeed?

VANDERVELDT. What else? Dear Lady Clarice, don't you see that you're compromised?

CLARICE. (*laughing heartily*) Am I, though?

VANDERVELDT. (*gleefully*) You are, I assure you! That's the ridiculous word they all will use! Every person you know at Hendingby will begin to cackle—to say nothing of the eligible villas in the neighborhood! To-morrow the Judge and Goddlestone will clamour for an explanation, which you will naturally refuse——

CLARICE. Why?

VANDERVELDT. Because you will resent their impertinence in asking for it. Whereupon the Judge goes back to Law, and Goddlestone to Wagner. Lady

Clementina herself turns into my stout ally—and there is not a Companion of the Perfect Life but will entreat you to marry Vanderveldt!

CLARICE. (*sits* R., *laughing*) Oh dear, oh dear! I *can't* picture you as the wicked Earl and myself the Village Maiden!

VANDERVELDT. (*laughing with her*) It *is* lovely, isn't it? And so deliciously simple!

CLARICE. I could forgive everything except the lie to the Colonel!

VANDERVELDT. Put against that my magnificent honesty in revealing the whole plot to you! It would have been so easy for me to let you believe it was all accident!

CLARICE. That's true. (*turns to him*) Why *have* you told?

VANDERVELDT. It would have been rather mean to keep up the deception! Besides, I had such faith in your admirable sense of humour.

CLARICE. (*pleasantly*) Well, you have certainly amused me very much!

VANDERVELDT. Really, Lady Clarice, I believe I shall make quite a (*coming to her*) passable husband?

CLARICE. (*a little drily*) I have not been in the Diplomatic Service, Mr. Vanderveldt—but when *I* was very young, and in the nursery, I learned a humble precept about counting chickens——

VANDERVELDT. (*laughing*) It's the old hens *I* count on!—(*going up* C.) Well, now that peace is signed—it *is* signed, is it not?

CLARICE. Dear me, yes—or let's call it an armistice. *I* am not angry!

VANDERVELDT. In that case I'll bring in the hamper.

CLARICE. Ah! There is a hamper?

VANDERVELDT. (*reproachfully*) You didn't imagine I'd let you go dinnerless! I'll fetch that hamper (*getting hat from dresser* L.) and, incidentally, smoke a cigarette.

CLARICE. You have my permission.

VANDERVELDT. (*turning back, ingratiatingly*) You're not cross with me?

CLARICE. My dear Mr. Vanderveldt, I assure you the adventure delights me!

VANDERVELDT *goes, through the door at back;* CLARICE *makes a funny grimace at the retreating figure, sits on front of table* C. *She unclasps her hand and holds up the interrupter-plug. She looks at it—it gives her a sudden idea. She rises quickly, opens curtains of bar window, then goes to bar door, and opens the door leading to the tap-room;* ALFIE *is alone in there, standing on the counter, with his back to her, arranging bottles on the shelf. She calls* "Alfie, Alfie!" *He turns eagerly.*

ALFIE. Yes, my lady?

CLARICE. Come here, Alfie, I want you.

*She goes back into the room; he jumps down and comes to her,* R. C.

CLARICE. Alfie, is there anyone in the village who knows how to drive a motor?

ALFIE. Oh lor', m'm—no, m'm, my lady, I mean—'less it be the parson—parson's wonderful clever.

CLARICE. The parson! Oh, there *is* a parson here, at least!

ALFIE. Yes, m'm. Shall I ask him, m'm, my lady?

CLARICE. Yes—but where is he? I've no time!

ALFIE. He's talking with mother now—in the washhouse. He's come to——

CLARICE. That's fine! Bring him here, Alfie—at once—(*he is starting off—she stops him*) Alfie, I don't want your mother to know—I don't want *anyone* to know—why I sent for him.

ALFIE. (*opening wide eyes, but sturdily*) I see, my lady.

CLARICE. That's a dear boy. (*she lays her hand on his shoulder*) Just ask him to come here—that's all.

And of course you won't tell the gentleman—I mean the one who came here with me.

ALFIE. No, m'm.

CLARICE. (*setting him*) A secret between us two, Alfie.

ALFIE. (*eagerly*) I won't tell no one, my lady. Not if they put wild horses to me, I won't.

CLARICE. Good boy. But there *are* no horses, Alfie! (*she pushes him off*) Be quick!

ALFIE *dashes through the tap-room door;* CLARICE *goes to the mirror down* L. *and touches up her hair. Then she sits. After a moment the* REV. MR. LANGSTON *enters through the door at back. He is a very stiff, starched, dull-looking man of forty-four or forty-five.* CLARICE *gives a little groan as she sees his unpromising appearance.*

CLARICE. Good-afternoon. Won't you sit down? (*she draws bar curtain. Motions him to a chair*)

LANGSTON. (*sitting* R.) Good afternoon. Mrs. Mellon has told me of your unfortunate accident.

CLARICE. Yes. (*sits* R. C.)

LANGSTON. I deplore that this should have occurred so far from home—and at a moment, too, when all the horses——

CLARICE. (*abruptly*) Do you understand motors?

LANGSTON. Theoretically—and to a certain, and very limited extent, practically.

CLARICE. (*happily*) Oh!

LANGSTON. Lord Keymer, the patron of this living—which, alas, is a very poor one—has occasionally allowed me—or, to be more accurate, his chauffeur has allowed me—to drive a few hundred yards or so——

CLARICE. (*eagerly*) And do you know how to start it—set it going?

LANGSTON. (*smiling*) That, of course, presents no difficulty. But I'm afraid that, as regards *repairing* your machine——

CLARICE. Mr.——

LANGSTON. Langston——

CLARICE. Mr. Langston, you are in a position to render me a very great service——

LANGSTON. (*staring*) Madam?

CLARICE. Will you drive me to Calby Junction?

LANGSTON. (*more and more amazed*) Drive you to Calby?

CLARICE. (*nodding*) Yes, will you?

LANGSTON. But you came, I understood from Mrs. Mellon, with a gentleman, and the car has broken down——

CLARICE. (*drawing her chair nearer to him*) Mr. Langston, I am rather in a hurry just now, and I shall be able to explain better later on. The car has *not* broken down—a practical joke has been played on me——

LANGSTON. (*aloofly*) Indeed?

CLARICE. (*eagerly, as she holds out the plug*) He took this out—which connects the thingumy with the what-d'you-call-it—and of course the machine stopped——

LANGSTON. Naturally; it unites the electric spark with the——

CLARICE. (*stopping him*) Yes. Well, as I said, will you drive me to Calby?

LANGSTON. My dear Madam! In the first place, though I should no doubt avoid a serious accident, I am a most unpractised driver.

CLARICE. Oh, I'll chance that! will you?

LANGSTON. And again—without the consent of your companion, the owner of the car——

CLARICE. Oh, never mind him! You'll do it, won't you, to oblige *me?*

*She looks most sweetly at him—his face grows longer and longer, and his tone colder and more suspicious.*

LANGSTON. I regret, Madam, that I cannot lend myself to such an—escapade——

CLARICE. (*gently reproachful, as she moves nearer to him*) Escapade! Oh! *dear* Mr. Langston!

LANGSTON. (*retreating, stiffly*) You will readily understand that I, as a clergyman, have to be especially careful——

CLARICE. There is nothing so *very* compromising in taking a car, and a lady, to the railway station!

LANGSTON. (*still edging away*) Madam, I am profoundly grieved——

CLARICE. (*with all the bewitchingness she possesses*) Please, dear Mr. Langston——

LANGSTON. (*rises, acidly*) It is impossible——

CLARICE. When I promise to tell you the whole story in the car!

LANGSTON. It would then be too late for me to decide as to its ethical value.

CLARICE. (*in despair*) Ethical value! (*with a last attempt, as she smiles at him*) *Won't* you do this for me?

LANGSTON. (*steeled against her smile*) You must really excuse me. (*goes to bar door.* LADY CLARICE *crosses to* L., *he turns to her*) Why, I don't even know your name!

(*He has got to the door, and has his hand on the handle.*)

CLARICE. I am Lady Clarice Howland.

LANGSTON. (*with a start*) Howland? Did you say Howland?

CLARICE. (*wondering*) Yes.

LANGSTON. (*nervously*) Not a relation, by any chance, of Arthur Howland, the great cricketer?

CLARICE. (*with a gleam of hope*) I am his widow.

LANGSTON. (*rushing towards her with overwhelming enthusiasm*) Arthur Howland's widow! Lady Clarice, you can command me! I will drive that motor-car—I will drive twenty motor-cars! (CLARICE *runs up* C., *looks off* R., *and comes down* L. *again*) Arthur Howland! He is my greatest admiration! I knew him at Oxford

—I can't say I was his friend, but I knew him—I was there when he threw the hammer! I was at Lord's when he made his double century against the Australians—I was at the Oval when he carried out his bat for three hundred and forty-seven against Somerset! This is a great joy to me—a great joy! Command me!

CLARICE. (*who has in vain attempted to stop him*) Mr. Langston, the gentleman who is with me will come back very soon—I don't want him to see you. When he comes, slip out through that door—go to the shed at the top of the hill—the car's there—put in this nasty little thing (*she gives him the plug*) and set it going!

LANGSTON. (*taking the plug*) Yes, yes—I will!

CLARICE. Then, when you've started it, come close to the house—and whistle——

LANGSTON. What? What? What shall I whistle?

CLARICE. Anything you like—as long as I know.

LANGSTON. I am not musical, Lady Clarice—there are very few tunes that I can recall. Stay, though, there is one—with which it is just possible you may be acquainted—"The Honey-suckle and the Bee?"

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Yes, yes—that will do admirably! Whistle that! Then I'll slip out, and we'll go off. You'll do it?

LANGSTON. There's *nothing* I would not do for Arthur Howland's widow!

CLARICE. (*picking up her cloak and giving it to him*) Take this and put it in the car. Not a word to anyone, of course!

LANGSTON. (*taking the cloak*) Not a word!

CLARICE. If the innkeeper or his wife should see you——

LANGSTON. Have no fear—I will evade them—I——

VANDERVELDT'S *voice is heard off, at the tap-room door, calling* "Mrs. Mellon, Mrs. Mellon!" *then* MRS. MELLON'S *voice,* "Yes, sir!" *then* VANDERVELDT,

"Will you take this hamper, please?" CLARICE, *with her finger to her lip, has motioned* LANGSTON *to silence; she now cautiously opens the door leading to the tap-room, from which* MRS. MELLON *is seen to go out—then she pushes* MR. LANGSTON *through it, goes to the other door, calling,* "Bring it in here, Mrs. Mellon." MRS. MELLON *and* VANDERVELDT *are seen through the window coming along the road.* CLARICE *sees that the other door is closed, then advances briskly towards them as they come in.*

CLARICE. (*to* VANDERVELDT, *as she looks at the basket that* MRS. MELLON *holds*) Thoughtful man! What a fine hamper! (*sits* R. C.)

MRS. MELLON. You have seen Mr. Langston, my lady?

CLARICE. Yes. (*to* VANDERVELDT, *carelessly*) The village curate. He came to condole!

MRS. MELLON. Shall I fetch the cloth, my lady, and lay the table?

CLARICE. Please. I'm getting *so* hungry! (MRS. MELLON *goes through the tap-room door*)

VANDERVELDT. *That's* a good sign! Then diplomatic relations are restored?

CLARICE. (*genially*) Why not? I told you that I had forgiven!

VANDERVELDT. I assure you, as I was walking out there, puffing at my cigarette, I had my doubts as to whether you were entirely pleased with me——

CLARICE. Really!

VANDERVELDT. Because, after all, it was possibly rather—wicked—of me——

CLARICE. (*sweetly*) I can pardon a great deal in the man who makes me laugh.

VANDERVELDT. (*with unbounded enthusiasm*) Lady Clarice, you are truly—now this, mind you, is a cold-blooded, reasonable statement of fact—you are truly the most adorable of women!

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Poor Mrs. Brevell!

VANDERVELDT. Mrs. Brevell! Mrs. Brevell belongs to the past I have left——

CLARICE. At the foot of the hill!

VANDERVELDT. I accept your metaphor! Lady Clarice, I've a presumptuous idea that the famous name of Howland will not be exchanged for that of Goddlestone or Cardick——

CLARICE. (*rises*) Lady Clarice Vanderveldt! It really doesn't sound bad! (*sits on front end of table*)

VANDERVELDT. Charmingly euphonious! It pleases me much! And, after all, the man who set fifty tons of granite in motion——

CLARICE. Should, you think, be able to stir one flinty heart!

*She beams at him;* VANDERVELDT *is on the best of terms with himself; they both laugh.* MRS. MELLON *comes from the tap-room door with the cloth, knives and forks, etc.* CLARICE *sits* R. C.

MRS. MELLON. (*beginning to lay the table*) Mellon tells me he saw the parson with your cloak, my lady——

VANDERVELDT. (*wondering*) With your cloak?

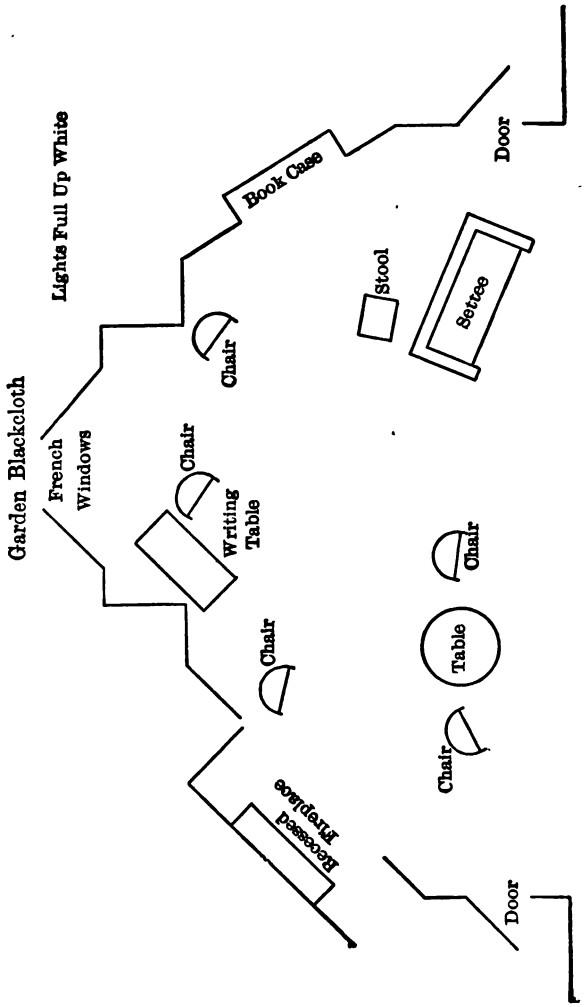
CLARICE. (*laughing*) The silly man! That's really *too* absent-minded! There was a tear—he was to take it to Mrs. Mellon—(*whistle heard off*—"The Honeysuckle and the Bee," *very much out of tune*) I'll go and recover it (*she moves to the door*) before he imagines he's St. Martin, and gives it away to a beggar!

VANDERVELDT. Let me——

CLARICE. (*stopping him*) No—I'll go—I hate seeing the cloth laid—you stay, and help Mrs. Mellon. (*half closes door, then peeps back.* VANDERVELDT *at back of door*) And be quick—I *am* so hungry! (*she runs out* L. C. *Motor-horn ready*)

MRS. MELLON. (*to* VANDERVELDT) What will you drink, sir? We've some very good sherry——

VANDERVELDT. (*going to the hamper, and opening it*) There's a bottle in here, Mrs. Mellon. (*he opens the*


Lights Full Up White
Garden Blackcloth
French Windows
Book Case
Door
Stool
Settee
Chair
Chair
Writing Table
Chair
Table
Chair
Chair
Recessed Fireplace
Door

ACT. IV

*hamper and brings out things*) This is a pie—it looks rather pleasant—have you a plate for it?

*He balances it in his hands*—MRS. MELLON *brings a pewter dish from the dresser.*

MRS. MELLON. Here, sir. (VANDERVELDT *puts the pie on the dish*) I've roasted a chicken for you, sir.

VANDERVELDT. Admirable—we'll begin with the chicken. (*he goes on unpacking*) Grapes—chocolate—pears—and—ah, this is the bottle. (*he holds it up to the light.*) Mrs. Mellon—There was a widow named Clicquot—(*Motor-horn off* R. *Loud at first, then fading in distance. Still holding the bottle*) Hullo! A motor coming? (MRS. MELLON *runs to the door and looks ou* )

MRS. MELLON. (*excitedly*) Lor', sir! Parson a-going off in the car with her ladyship! She's wavin' her hands!

*Violent and derisive snorts of the horn, growing fainter and fainter;* VANDERVELDT, *who has not stirred, very carefully lays down the bottle.*

VANDERVELDT. (*serenely*) Mrs. Mellon, you need only lay the table for one.

(*He moves to chair* R., *takes a cigarette out of his case and the curtain falls.*)

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## ACT IV.

*The drawing-room at Hendingby. There are French windows opening on to the lawn; there are doors to* R. *and* L. *It is the morning after the preceding act.*

LADY HENDINGBY *and* GODDLESTONE *are in the room; she in a Junoesque attitude, her hands folded in her lap—he nervously pacing to and fro, biting his nails and cracking his fingers.*

LADY HENDINGBY. (*after a silence*) Mr. Goddlestone, you would really oblige me by sitting down. (*he sits on settee* L.) I assure you there is no cause for such excitement——

GODDLESTONE. (*passing a hand across his brow*) No, no——

LADY HENDINGBY. You may be perfectly certain that a full and adequate explanation will be forthcoming——

GODDLESTONE. (*feverishly*) Evidently—evidently—oh, I've not the least doubt——

LADY HENDINGBY. Motor-cars break down—it is their nature to break down. I have told you how strongly I disapprove of Clarice having gone on this expedition with Mr. Vanderveldt—but accidents cannot be controlled.

GODDLESTONE. (*blurting out nervously*) Only we don't know yet that it *was* an accident!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*majestically*) Mr. Goddlestone!

GODDLESTONE. (*crushed*) Forgive me, forgive me—that is scarcely what I meant. Only Lady Clarice has shown such obvious preference for Mr. Vanderveldt——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with a superb wave of the hand*) That person is as distasteful to me as to you. And you may be sure that Hendingby has seen the last of him. That shall be *my* care!

*The* JUDGE *and* WOOLHAM *burst into the room from the garden, both looking careworn and tired—the* JUDGE *especially dishevelled and ten years older.*

JUDGE. (*eagerly*) Lady Hendingby, we've heard of the motor! It has been found, very badly smashed——

WOOLHAM. (*breathless*) Three miles from a place called Bardale! So it must have been——

LADY HENDINGBY. Clarice has returned!

WOOLHAM. (*joyfully*) Oh! She's not hurt?

LADY HENDINGBY. No.

WOOLHAM. I'll go to her! (*he rushes off*, R.)

JUDGE. (*who has dropped on stool* L. C.) Thank Heaven! When did she come?

GODDLESTONE. At nine o'clock this morning!

JUDGE. (*nervously*) With——?

LADY HENDINGBY. (*severely*) She returned alone.

JUDGE. (*with a deep sigh*) What a relief! And the explanation?

LADY HENDINGBY. I have not yet seen her. Clementina is with her now.

JUDGE. The night we have had of it! (*he mops his brow*) Walter and I sat up till past one—then we went, and have been on the move ever since!

LADY HENDINGBY. I told you there was no cause—

JUDGE. She came back alone! What *can* have become of— (*he sees* LADY HENDINGBY'S *deepening frown and pauses abruptly—then rises, and begins to pace the room*) Extraordinary! You've no idea?

LADY HENDINGBY. Clementina will tell us—she will be back in a moment. *Do* sit down, Judge! My nerves are a trifle jangled!

JUDGE. (*sitting* L. C.) Ten thousand pardons!—Have you been informed as to Clarice's—mode of return?

LADY HENDINGBY. (*sourly*) You do not imagine that I have questioned the servants? She has returned—that is enough. (GODDLESTONE *hums*, JUDGE *appears annoyed*)

LADY HENDINGBY'S *tone permits of no comment or answer. There is silence for full two minutes. They all sit blankly staring before them.* GODDLESTONE *falls to cracking his fingers, till* LADY HENDINGBY *looks severely at him, when he desists. The* JUDGE *clears his throat again and again, to* LADY HENDINGBY'S *evident annoyance. At last* CLEMENTINA *comes in*, R. *They all spring to their feet.*

LADY HENDINGBY. }
GODDLESTONE. } (*with simultaneous eagerness*) WELL?
JUDGE. }

CLEMENTINA. (*very embarrassed*) Mamma——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*impatiently*) My dear Clementina, you can speak before our friends! What does she say?

JUDGE. }
GODDLESTONE. } Yes, yes—what?

CLEMENTINA. NOTHING! (*they all start violently*)

GODDLESTONE. (*cracking his fingers, his eyes bulging*) I beg your pardon?

LADY HENDINGBY. (*angrily*) Clementina!

CLEMENTINA. (*in despair*) She refuses to give any explanation whatsoever! (JUDGE *sits on stool.* GODDLESTONE *on settee* L.)

*The general consternation is evident.* LADY HENDINGBY *lets herself fall heavily into a chair;* GODDLESTONE *shifts from one foot to the other, moistening his lips and cracking vigorously; the* JUDGE *assumes his most judicial frown;* CLEMENTINA *sits* R., *her eyes fixed on the floor.*

JUDGE. (*suavely*) My dear Lady Clementina! You seriously mean to tell us that your sister refuses——

CLEMENTINA. Absolutely! She is in her wildest and most freakish mood——

GODDLESTONE. (*pettishly*) But surely, when a lady goes out at four in the afternoon with a Mr. Vanderveldt and returns the——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*interrupting him, severely*) Mr. Goddlestone!

GODDLESTONE. (*protesting feebly*) Lady Hendingby, it is all very well, but——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*again stopping him, majestically*) *I* will go to her. (*rising*)

CLEMENTINA. (*dropping helplessly into a chair*)

It will be useless, mamma! She does nothing but laugh!

GODDLESTONE. (*grinding his teeth and rolling his eyes*) Laugh!

CLEMENTINA. She seems to regard it all as a joke!

GODDLESTONE. Joke!

JUDGE. She says nothing about Mr.—— ?

CLEMENTINA. Not a word!

LADY HENDINGBY. I will go to her at once. (*crossing to* R. *in front of table. She moves to the door,* R., *the* JUDGE *interposes, rises, crosses to* R. *behind table*)

JUDGE. (*soothingly*) Lady Hendingby, I really imagine it will be better if you allow *me* to interview your daughter——

GODDLESTONE. (*rises, snarling and biting his nails*) You!

JUDGE. (*ignoring* GODDLESTONE *and addressing* LADY HENDINGBY) I can quite understand that Clarice resents having questions put to her that suggest the *least*—want of confidence. I fancy that I, as a man of the world (*looks at* GODDLESTONE *triumphantly*) and an old friend, can persuade her of the necessity of an—explanation—without wounding her susceptibilities! May I?

LADY HENDINGBY. If you wish it. (*she returns to her chair*) Where *is* Clarice, Clementina?

CLEMENTINA. In the dining-room with Miss Coles, having breakfast. She seems very hungry. (LADY HENDINGBY *goes up* C.)

JUDGE. (*crosses to door* R.) Very well. I will go to her. And I believe I do not presume too much when I assure you, dear Lady Hendingby, that I shall bring you a complete account—of all that has happened!

*He goes* R., GODDLESTONE *takes two or three excited turns up and down the room, then comes to* LADY HENDINGBY *and holds out his hand.*

GODDLESTONE. Lady Hendingby, I will bid you good-bye.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*staring blankly at him*) Good-bye? (CLEMENTINA *rises*)

GODDLESTONE. Yes. I shall take the next train back to town. I am much obliged to you for your hospitality.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*coldly*) Good-bye, Mr. Goddlestone.

GODDLESTONE. (*going to* CLEMENTINA) Good-bye, Lady Clementina.

CLEMENTINA. (*hesitating*) Is not this—will you not at least——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*sternly*) Clementina!

CLEMENTINA. Good-bye, Mr. Goddlestone——

GODDLESTONE *touches her hand, bows, and goes, stiffly.*

LADY HENDINGBY. (*sits* R. C. *Shaking her head*) I cannot blame him!

CLEMENTINA. (*sits* R. *Quite overcome*) No! It is really *too* disgraceful!

LADY HENDINGBY. I have telegraphed for your father. I thought we had reached the limit when that wretched boy told me of his engagement to Miss Coles——

CLEMENTINA. (*dropping her hands into her lap*) Mamma! This may be a judgment upon us!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*tartly*) I must request you, Clementina, not to bring religion into every-day life!—You say Clarice was laughing? Absolutely laughing?

CLEMENTINA. As though nothing had happened! And she congratulated me—before Miss Coles!—on Woolham's engagement! Mamma, Clarice will have to marry Mr. Vandervelt.

LADY HENDINGBY. Vanderveldt!

CLEMENTINA. There's no help for it!

LADY HENDINGBY. *You* suggest that! A man of his character!

CLEMENTINA. *Anything* is better than a scandal in the family! What are we to say to our friends—to the people about? I shall be ashamed to meet anyone. Oh, that such a thing should have happened to *me!*

LADY HENDINGBY. At least we will wait—perhaps the Judge——

CLEMENTINA. Mamma, what would *you* say yourself if a woman you knew had gone out in the afternoon with a man who was not a relation—and returned the next morning! Would *you* believe any explanation she chose to give! No woman would! You know that!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with a deep sigh*) I'm afraid that is so! But the story may possibly not get about —we'll try——

(MISS PELLING *comes from* L.)

MISS PELLING. Mrs. Cording-Jones has called——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with a groan*) Already!

MISS PELLING. She apologizes for so early a visit, but she has heard about Lady Clarice, and wishes——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*helplessly*) Yes, yes. (MISS PELLING *goes up* C.) Go to her, Clementina—(CLEMENTINA *rises*) and keep her here—till we have something definite to say!

CLEMENTINA. (*as she goes*) You see, mamma! What did I tell you? (*she goes*, L.)

MISS PELLING. (*coming down* C., *standing*) In accordance with your instructions, Lady Hendingby, I have spoken to Miss Coles, and conveyed to her delicately that her engagement to Lord Woolham was highly distasteful to the family——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*eagerly*) Yes, yes—well?

MISS PELLING. She very politely expressed her deep regret, but said she was quite fond of Lord Woolham.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with a gesture of despair*) What I might have expected! You need say no more, Miss Pelling.

MISS PELLING. (*coldly*) It is my duty to inform

you that several people of no importance have called to enquire about Lady Clarice——

LADY HENDINGBY. (*drily, with a gesture of dismissal*) I am obliged to you, Miss Pelling.

MISS PELLING. Is the reply to such enquiries to be confined to the bald statement that Lady Clarice has returned?

LADY HENDINGBY. I shall be glad if you will leave me, Miss Pelling. My head aches.

MISS PELLING *goes, stiffly,* L. LADY HENDINGBY *gives a deep sigh, and waits. After a moment the* JUDGE *comes from* R., *walking very slowly, hanging his head, looking exceedingly dejected.*

LADY HENDINGBY. (*eagerly, rising*) Well? Well?

JUDGE. (*sitting heavily*) Not a word! (*crosses to* L. C.)

LADY HENDINGBY. What! Not even to you!

JUDGE. Not a solitary word! Every question of mine was met with a quip, or a jest. I am completely bewildered!

LADY HENDINGBY *goes to the wall and rings up* R.

JUDGE. I told her we had located the car—she entered into a disquisition on the probable effect the motor-industry would have upon the supply of horses —and whether, if these disappeared, the donkey would become the Friend of Man! And so on. Every question I put—and I assure you I was *most* sympathetic, and genial—every question was tossed in the air like a shuttlecock, and met with a flippant observation that was in no sense an answer! I am puzzled, Lady Hendingby!

(A FOOTMAN *comes in,* L.)

LADY HENDINGBY. Ask Lady Clarice to come here at once. (*sits* R. C.)

FOOTMAN. Yes, my lady. (*he crosses stage and exits* R.)

LADY HENDINGBY. I should have done better to go to her myself!

JUDGE. (*rising, wearily*) I mentioned the name of the man Vanderveldt—only to be told how extraordinarily amusing he was! That was all. With instances of his humour, and excerpts from his philosophy! As to what had happened—not a word!—Lady Hendingby, I confess to you I am perplexed—and slightly displeased.

CLEMENTINA. (*to* JUDGE) Well!

JUDGE. (*crosses to door* L.) Lady Clementina—I—— (*exits* L.)

*He goes off,* L., *hanging his head, meeting* CLEMENTINA, *who runs eagerly to her mother.*

CLEMENTINA. Nothing, of course? No explanation?

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with a mournful shake of the head*) I have sent for her——

CLEMENTINA. Mrs. Cording-Jones would like to see you, mamma. She *quite* agrees with me that——

(CLARICE *comes in,* R. *There is a moment's silence.* CLEMENTINA *goes hurriedly,* L.)

CLARICE. (*quietly, coming* C.) You want to see me, mamma?

LADY HENDINGBY. (*rises. Almost passionately*) Clarice, I have no words in which to express my indignation!

CLARICE. Indignation, mamma! With whom!

LADY HENDINGBY. With whom? Who but you!

CLARICE. With me? I imagined I had the fullest claim on your sympathy!

LADY HENDINGBY. When you absolutely refuse to account for your extraordinary behaviour!

CLARICE. (*sitting*) My dear mamma, what *are*

you saying! My behaviour extraordinary! Really! Why, what have I done?

LADY HENDINGBY. In the teeth of my formally expressed desire you go on this mad expedition with Mr. Vanderveldt—you return the following morning, and marvel at an explanation being required!

CLARICE. (*quietly*) Yes, mamma, I marvel at its being *required*.

LADY HENDINGBY. (*fiercely*) Have you taken leave of your senses, Clarice?

CLARICE. I don't know—I seem to be learning a good deal! Where's Mr. Goddlestone? (*looking off* C.)

LADY HENDINGBY. (*tragically*) Gone! (*crossing to* L.)

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Gone! Mr. Vanderveldt was right. I should never have believed it!

LADY HENDINGBY. Perhaps you will now be good enough to tell me——

CLARICE. Not yet, mamma. Except this. I arrive this morning, hungry and tired—there is no one about—I have a bath, and a change. I expect to find you all rushing to me, and saying how anxious you've been, and how glad you are to see me again. Instead of that, Clementina comes with a sour face and demands an explanation. She is followed by the Judge—looking very yellow—who at once puts me into the witness-box. And now you—even you! It is amazing!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*wildly*) Your folly is amazing! It is amazing that you should not realize——

CLARICE. (*drawing herself up, proudly*) Is it conceivable that I, Clarice Howland, am to be called upon to "explain" because I have stayed out after dark with a Mr. Vanderveldt? That my friends, the people who know me, my mother and sister, should be uneasy till they receive an assurance as to my behaviour? Mamma, you and Clementina are very indignant at our being denied the suffrage—I had rather women began to show some confidence in their own sex—then men would respect us, too!

*She stands facing her mother;* LADY HENDINGBY *is about to make an indignant reply, when the* COLONEL *comes impetuously from* L. *He rushes eagerly towards* CLARICE, *with outstretched hands.*

COLONEL. Oh, Lady Clarice, I *am* so glad! I've been fearfully anxious!

LADY HENDINGBY. (*with almost tearful dignity*) Colonel Rayner, you have a certain influence over my daughter that I apparently lack. She refuses to give me, or her sister, or the Judge, the least explanation as to what has happened. *You* may be more fortunate. I leave the matter in your hands. (COLONEL *opens door* L. LADY HENDINGBY *goes to door* L.) You will be rendering the family the greatest possible service! (*she goes heavily*, L.)

COLONEL. (*staring in utter amazement*) Explanation! What *does* she mean?

CLARICE. (*sitting* C., *and speaking somewhat drily*) Begin, Colonel! Put your questions!

COLONEL. Questions! What *has* come over you all? I hear the car has been found in a ditch, fifty miles from here.

CLARICE. (*smiling*) And in *such* a condition!

COLONEL. Well, surely it does not need a Sherlock Holmes to divine that you had a breakdown, at some place too far from a station for you to get back last night! Lady Clarice, I *am* so relieved! I had terrible visions of an accident!

CLARICE. My dear Colonel, you forget that I went out with Mr. Vanderveldt at four yesterday afternoon, and only returned at nine this morning.

COLONEL. Thank heaven you *have* returned! I've had a sleepless night. And the only book I could lay my hands on was "Hansard's Debates!"

CLARICE. Are you aware that Mrs. Cording-Jones is here—and she is a terrible scandal-monger?

COLONEL. (*fiercely*) Scandal! Has anyone dared to use such a word—in connection with you?

CLARICE. (*laughing*) Don't look so fierce, Colonel! You heard what mamma said, about the service you could render the family?

COLONEL. Do you seriously wish me to believe that any person in this house is capable of such sublime imbecility as to——

CLARICE. All of them, except Aggie and Woolham —and you. But I'm afraid you're a shockingly unsophisticated person. You won't cross-examine me? I'm ready!

COLONEL. Don't tease me to-day! Remember, I'm leaving this morning—my things are packed. But, before I go, I've something to say to you. (*brings stool forward and sits. He pauses*)

CLARICE. Well?

COLONEL. About Mr. Vanderveldt.

CLARICE. (*rather drily, with a momentary suspicion*) You want to hear where he is, and why he hasn't come back with me?

COLONEL. No—not exactly. I'm afraid I'm not as interested in Mr. Vanderveldt's movements—as I should be, perhaps! I'm referring to a statement he made to me yesterday—concerning you.

CLARICE. (*remembering*) Ah! You've told no one?

COLONEL. He pledged me to silence. Lady Clarice, I informed him—that I could not profess to be—delighted—with his news.

CLARICE. (*blandly*) No? That's a pity.

COLONEL. (*picking his words with great effort*) But—it occurred to me—during my long vigil last night—that I am—possibly—over-prejudiced, and—(*with a sudden change of voice and manner, returning to his old bluff self*) No, hang it, I won't be a humbug! Lady Clarice, I'll confess to you, frankly, that I've no especial liking for Mr. Vanderveldt—but I hope—oh, with all my heart!—that you'll be happy—and that I am—quite wrong——

CLARICE. (*critically*) Pretty—oh yes, *quite* pretty —but a trifle—marionettish, don't you think?

COLONEL. (*sulkily*) I'm not a spinner of phrases. At least what I said was sincere——(*rises, puts stool at back of settee*)

CLARICE. (*lightly*) I daresay. But I liked you better yesterday. What was it you were saying yesterday when you suddenly bounced off?

COLONEL. (*rising and turning away*) I was very near making a fool of myself.

CLARICE. (*clapping her hands*) That's it, of course—I remember! You were telling me something about—folly—having no age.

COLONEL. (*in some indignation*) Lady Clarice——

CLARICE. You put it more prettily, of course—in fact, you spun *that* phrase rather neatly—

COLONEL. (*turning squarely towards her, and speaking hotly*) This is not generous—not what I should have expected——

CLARICE. No?

COLONEL. The last thing in the world—that you should do—is to laugh at this love of mine——

CLARICE. And why?

COLONEL. (*with deep feeling*) Because—when a woman has inspired in a man such—a love as I have for you—the mere fact that she cannot—return it, or share it—should make her—very—gentle . . . Good-bye. (*he holds out his hand—she doesn't take it*)

CLARICE. You really think that? Well, perhaps you're right. (*rises*) By the way—it's an odd thing—I don't know your Christian name!

COLONEL. (*shortly*) Frank — Good-bye, Lady Clarice.

CLARICE. (*waving away his hand*) Don't go. "Frank,"—oh yes, *quite* characteristic! People should be very careful what names they give their children. Now, if I had been christened Martha instead of—— Mr. Vanderveldt!

VANDERVELDT *has popped his head through the garden-door; he comes in.*

VANDERVELDT. (*with humorous melancholy*) In the flesh!

CLARICE. Where *have* you sprung from? (*then to the* COLONEL, *who is moving off* L.) Don't go, Colonel!

VANDERVELDT. I was hoist on my own petard! The horses hadn't come back this morning—I had to walk to Bardale——

CLARICE. Poetic justice! And—oh, Mr. Vanderveldt!—your beautiful car!

VANDERVELDT. How has it fared?

CLARICE. Two miles from Bardale it ran into a cow.

VANDERVELDT. No!

CLARICE. I assure you! But the cow didn't seem to mind. It is true we were only travelling at the rate of about a mile and a half an hour—Mr. Langston was *very* careful! But after that little collision the car didn't seem very happy in its inside, and about ten minutes later it went flopping into a ditch——

VANDERVELDT. Heavens! You weren't hurt?

CLARICE. I fell on to the Church! (*they laugh*) I pulled the poor man out—it *was* so funny!—but I'm afraid he scratched his nose. The poor car, though!

VANDERVELDT. I applaud its gallantry in letting you escape unharmed.

CLARICE. Then we had to walk—oh, ever so far! —to a village—and Mr. Langston went home—and I got a donkey-cart—you forgot about donkeys, didn't you?—and it drove me to Calby, but the last train had gone, and I had to sleep there. *I* only arrived an hour ago.

VANDERVELDT. An hour ago? And how have they welcomed you?

CLARICE. As you predicted! Every one has clamored for an explanation—except the Colonel.

VANDERVELDT. (*with a quick look*) Except the Colonel?

CLARICE. Yes. (*to the* COLONEL, *who is edging away*) Don't go.

VANDERVELDT. (*who has interrogated her with his eyes, and read the answer*) Ah! That petard again! And up I fly. I feel myself flopping in the breeze!

CLARICE. (*smiling*) You really have wonderful intuition!

VANDERVELDT. My Waterloo! Mr. Vanderveldt abdicates! Have you *quite* made up your mind?

CLARICE. Oh quite! I really think I always intended to. I've gone so far as to ask him his Christian name.

COLONEL. (*whom this conversation has quite bewildered—he has been staring blankly from one to the other*) Lady Clarice!

CLARICE. (*merrily*) That's all right, Colonel. We're talking of you.

(*The* COLONEL *frets and fumes.*)

VANDERVELDT. (*philosophically*) Destiny!

CLARICE. Sometimes, you see, when we shake trees, the fruit falls into *other* people's laps!

COLONEL. (*gruffly*) Lady Clarice, I am quite at a loss——

CLARICE. Mr. Vanderveldt will explain.

VANDERVELDT. I?

CLARICE. That is your penance.

VANDERVELDT. H'm—well—here goes! Thus do I execute myself! (CLARICE *sits* R.) Colonel Rayner, I made a certain statement to you yesterday about Lady Clarice and myself.

COLONEL. Well?

VANDERVELDT. That statement, Colonel, was what diplomatists would describe as an—intelligent anticipation of fact.

COLONEL. (*staggered*) What???

VANDERVELDT. But I'm sorry to say it now appears to be accurate only—as far as I myself am concerned—and to lack the confirmation of—the other party!

COLONEL. (*staring at* LADY CLARICE) The other party? You?

VANDERVELDT. All the same, Lady Clarice's engagement *will* be made public to-day——

COLONEL. *Will* be? To whom?

VANDERVELDT. Ask her yourself! And—I say it regretfully—this is one of the rare cases where the better man wins! (*he saunters to the windows*) And you owe it all to me--and my motor! I've been the god—out of the machine! (*he goes, through the garden to* R.)

COLONEL. (*coming* C. *excitedly*) Clarice!

CLARICE. (*rises, smiling softly at him*) Yes!

COLONEL. Am I dreaming? You'll marry me? You'll be my wife?

CLARICE. (*holding out her hands to him*) If *you* care to take a woman who is so—flippant and frivolous . . . But a woman, after all, with a heart . . . And there, dear . . . Frank . . . where no one can see it . . . is a good deal of love . . . for you. . . . (*They embrace and kiss, as the curtain falls*)

CURTAIN.

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